Vol. X. No. 2, OCTOBER, 1941.

SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by
D. W. HARDING L. C. KNIGHTS F. R. LEAVIS

CONTENTS

CONSERVATISM AND TRADITION: POST OBITUM—
DONALD FRANCIS TOVEY
HAMILTON HARTY
FRANK BRIDGE by *W. H. Mellers* *Page* 106

A CRITICAL THEORY OF JANE AUSTEN'S WRITINGS (II):
'Lady Susan' into 'Mansfield Park,' by *Q. D. Leavis* 114

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ITALIAN POETRY (I),
by *D. A. Traversi* 143

REVALUATIONS (XIV): JOSEPH CONRAD (concluded),
by *F. R. Leavis* 157

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS 182

A PLEA FOR ENGLISH BALLET, by Boris Ford (p. 182). THE 'THIRTIES REPLY, *Folios of New Writing, Spring 1941* reviewed by R. G. Cox (p. 189). CRUMBS FROM THE BANQUET, *Points of View* by T. S. Eliot, reviewed by R. O. C. Winkler (p. 194). *Ideals and Illusions* by Susan Stebbing, reviewed by J. C. Maxwell (p. 198). THE CONCISE 'C.H.E.L.', *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* reviewed by Boris Ford (p. 200). MR. AUDEN'S WELTANSCHAUUNG, *New Year Letter* reviewed by R. O. C. Winkler (p. 206). A BRAHMS RECORDING, *Trio in A minor for clarinet, 'cello and piano* reviewed by W. H. Mellers (p. 211). MR. NEWTON AND THE CONQUEST OF APPEARANCES, *European Painting and Sculpture* reviewed by Stephen Reiss (p. 212).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONSERVATISM AND TRADITION

POST OBITUM.
DONALD FRANCIS TOVEY.
HAMILTON HARTY.
FRANK BRIDGE.

THERE can be no reasonable doubt that the influence of the late Donald Francis Tovey on our musical life was incommensurably greater than one would gather from his published works, creative or critical. As a pianist and conductor he displayed—what so few professional virtuosi possess—great historical knowledge and the understanding of a thorough musician, combined with sensitiveness and sympathy, yet one could hardly claim that he was among the supreme creative performers of history. As a composer his work is so steeped in his learning—his knowledge of other men's music, particularly Haydn's and Beethoven's—that it sounds like mere pastiche or student's exercise until one has learned to respond to the authetic Tovey flavour; and even then its models are such unexpected ones for a contemporary composer that one can't help responding to it rather as one would to a horticultural sport, so that it is difficult not to over- or under-estimate it according to one's personal proclivities. Even his written works are few and almost casual, occasioned more by pressure of circumstances (programme notes or lectures) than by any desire to commit his reflections to the relative durability of print. Yet he must have been one of the greatest teachers—of any art—in our time; and he preferred talking to writing. The two posthumous volumes[1] are valuable mostly for their very informality; because they convey the accent of Tovey's talk and thereby the essence of his musical creed; because they indicate his notions as to what musical education ought to be, notions which informed equally his most conversational epigram about music and the scholarship of the Bach editions and the *Companion to the Art of Fugue*.

---

[1] *A Musician Talks*, by Donald Francis Tovey. (Oxford Press, in two volumes, Vol. 1, *The Integrity of Music*, 7/6;
Vol. 2, *Musical Textures*, 6/-.)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I do not think it is true to suggest that Tovey made any profoundly original or revolutionary statements about the art which he practised so assiduously. The beliefs he held by should be (but aren't) commonplaces of musical aesthetics; his importance lies in his expressing them with a precision that convinces and an authority that awes. He had an unparalleled knowledge of European music, particularly of the classical epoch and the sixteenth century, and he used this knowledge never as dead matter to clutter the intelligence but as material for the intelligence to work upon. To read these books is to realize the source of his greatness as a teacher; to be aware of the embracing coherence of his point of view, of how he taught his pupils that most difficult task, to think consistently in musical terms. With the training in intelligence about and in music which his teaching presupposes one imagines that the shrewd programme notes which make up his *Essays in Musical Analysis* might become what, to the non-Tovey-trained reader, they are not, namely essays in musical *criticism*. At least the basis of his tenets is that technique and aesthetics are inseparable, so that the detail and elaboration of his technical investigations becomes of importance not merely to the professional student but to all those concerned about music as a manifestation of the human spirit. It is, I think, a weakness of the essays that one mightn't, from internal evidence, always be aware of this: these last books make it clear that if one had been taught by him one could have no doubts.

A somewhat lengthy list of quotations will demonstrate this more clearly than any review of these volumes' contents:

> 'The teachers of strict counterpoint merely added the stiffness of modern tonality to the restrictions of pure sixteenth century polyphony, entirely failing to see that those restrictions and the freedom and variety of the Church modes were intimately related . . . Nothing that concerns the composer as a means to an end can be separated from that end. Counterpoint is the art by which a combination of good melodic lines produces complete harmony without the need of any inferior accessory matter. It is ridiculous to say that such art is only a means and not an end in itself. If the counterpoint, with or without accessory matter, is not beautiful, why complain that it is too ingenious? It is not ingenious at all . . . It so happened that during the career of Palestrina . . . the purists were the persons of far-sighted

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intellect and, roughly speaking, we may say that it was the inaccurate artists who were dull. At no later period in musical history has the academic theory been so completely in harmony with the finest musical inspiration of contemporary composers.'

'The harmony of the dramatic sonata style of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven is in detail simpler than that of Bach, because you cannot build large-scale relations of key on a basis of elaborate harmonic detail, any more than you can construct a dramatically exciting play out of epigrams. Beethoven's harmony may become as abstruse as the profoundest of Bach's figured chorales if his task allows him to devote a short section of a work to matters of a local harmonic interest, as in the Variations on a waltz of Diabelli . . . You cannot conceive that any movement of the B minor Mass should need some merely architectural chords to complete it; but when musicians regard the last forty-odd bars of Beethoven's C minor Symphony as a meaningless noise they are as far from truth as the most naive listener to whom a fugue is a tuneless chaos. These forty bars are meaningless without the rest of the symphony, but the symphony ends as truly within its own length as the " Et in terra pax " of the B minor Mass.'

'The difference between Bach and Handel consists largely in the fact that Bach is so continually adding pioneer work to his routine that the pioneer work itself rapidly forms into habits, whereas Handel exerts himself only when the Bible or other special circumstances arouse him . . . If the burden of knowledge is too great for the artist, his remedy is not to have less knowledge but to have more habit and experience in the handling of it . . . Great inspiration is indistinguishable from first-rate athletic form, whether mental or physical.'

'If we can see no more in Beethoven's orchestration than was seen by Rimsky-Korsakov, to whom it was nearly as obsolete as a tricycle with solid tyres is to the owner of a Rolls Royce, then we shall certainly not appreciate, much less achieve, the splendours of Rimsky-Korsakov's brilliant and meticulously pure orchestration; and though we may easily emulate the perky provinciality and pedantry of his mind, we shall suffer in our own estimation from the hopeless disadvantage of being British, whether Northern or Southern, instead of having the privilege of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being Russian, and therefore romantic and exotic.'

. . . 'Knowledge of Bach's orchestration is obtained through historic research, but it becomes a set of purely aesthetic principles inherent in the music.'

'No mature work of art is wonderful "for the time at which it was written." It is simply wonderful at all times. A naïve belief is now prevalent that all great artists have been in advance of their time. The effect of this doctrine is to make the average artist of the present day ready to believe that it is his duty to be unintelligible to his contemporaries. This is not difficult. All he need do is be unintelligible to himself . . . It is more than a living composer's reputation is worth to be accused of anything more than a private new aesthetic of his own, but in the time of Beethoven correctness was the chief criterion in all the arts: and a very much better and more stimulating criterion it is than our sterilizing criterion of originality.'

If one reads the above quotations carefully one can see implicit in them the centrality of Tovey's position with reference to all the most important subjects he discusses—his notion of the integrity or purity of musical forms ('Wagner is one of the supreme masters of musical forms but the integrity of his art makes this form arise out of the conditions of his drama'), his distinction between musical textures (the polyphonic principle) and musical shapes (the dramatic and architectural sonata), his notion of tonality, of fugue, of musical movement ('The weakness of Bruckner is in his uncritical and helpless retention of the externals of sonata form, for which the pace of his action is hopelessly too slow. Two things are essential to the sense of cosmic movement: firstly it must not be reduced to lower orders of movement by the only possible kind of event that can normally give us a sense of movement at all; and secondly it must become distinguishable from complete stagnation by the presence of smaller forms of movement, so that we may have a standard of comparison'), and even his discussion of such apparently narrowly technical procedures as recapitulation, the trill in eighteenth century music, or the setting of words. These things, together with the brilliant account of concerto form in the *Essays in Musical Analysis,* constitute Tovey's enduring contribution to musical aesthetics; and they provide examples, surely, of some (though not all) of the ways in which intelligence should function

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in *anyone* professing to call himself a musician.

It is important to insist on the centrality of Tovey's position because he has been subjected to an extravagance of hero-worship which has on the one hand represented him as endowed with a superhuman insight into musical problems before which ordinary mortals can only bow their heads in silent homage, and which has on the other hand tended covertly to apologize for the stiffness of his technical reasoning by means of the 'wise and witty' belleslettristic approach.[2] Apart from a donnish strain which occasionally leans towards facetious dedications and elaborate jokes in indices, Tovey has done nothing to deserve either fate: he was an intensely practical musician who devoted his life to an endeavour to teach other would-be practical musicians what the fundamentals of their practicality ought to be. He was not a seer and possibly not a genius; he was a musician who was not afraid to think and

---

[2]It must be admitted that Tovey's writing is addressed to a specialized public in so far as it is mostly unintelligible without a comprehensive acquaintance with musical terminology: but it does not call for more knowledge than anyone who is sufficiently interested in music to want to read Tovey should have any difficulty in acquiring. The rewards for a little effort are manifold. It is, of course, to the Plain Man without specialized musical learning that the 'wise and witty' school of musical journalism is largely directed. Although it make things easy, it needn't be pernicious and may be helpful, as we can see from Mr. Eric Blom's *Birmingham Post* journalism recently collated under the title of *A Musical Postbag* (Dent, 12/6). Even the Plain Man will learn more about music from a few pages of the Tovey-like immediate analysis and interpretation of historical information in the light of aesthetics which is to be found in (say) Mr. Blom's fine book on Beethoven's piano sonatas than he will from volumes of musical after-breakfast talk; but such talk should have its place in a civilized society and Mr. Blom provides it more admirably than anyone since the hard-hitting days of Corno Di Bassetto. (Nowadays we are more elegant, more scholarly, and fundamentally less serious). At the same time the 12/6 which the publishers demand seems to me altogether excessive for a collection of journalistic essays which are, as Mr. Blom is the first to admit, by nature ephemeral.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to persuade others to think with him. As such, his kind is so rare that his name will, one hopes, be long venerated.

As Tovey's name will always be associated with Edinburgh, so the name of Sir Hamilton Harty, who died on February 19th, will always be associated with Manchester. He was among the most distinguished of British conductors, not only for the virility and sensitiveness of his performance, but for the enterprise of his programme-making. His performances of the large-scale works of Berlioz, particularly the *Requiem*, will count for me among the supreme musical experiences of a lifetime; since Harty's virtual retirement through ill-health they have never been performed at all. It is odd that one so alert to Berlioz's extremely subtle melodic genius should, in his own composition, follow the turgid nineteenth century tradition which is the polar opposite to Berlioz's aristocratic finesse; his performances of Berlioz were in my opinion more truly creative, of greater significance for the present day, than any of his original compositions which expressed at second hand the feeling, as well as the idom, of a generation that is lost to us.

And yet I think it was this very generation that gave Harty the moral backbone to use his intelligence and sensitiveness to such effect in less obviously creative fields, so that while having himself neither ability nor desire to feel differently from the generality of his more intelligent contemporaries he had the power to respond magnificently to other and profounder personalities whose ways of experiencing were indeed unique and irreplaceable. His generation enabled him to make the most of his potentialities whereas nowadays many men, probably equally endowed with talent and intelligence, fail to achieve anything and dissipate their energies for want of any moral backbone at all. In this sense Tovey and Harty were of the same build: there was an element of greatness in their personalities—a courage, sanity and power—that many who are more creative than Tovey and cleverer than Harty may often be without. Such personalities were never plentiful; to-day they are rare indeed.

Frank Bridge, the third figure in English musical life who has died this year, was in this respect a representative, I think, of the later generation; an artist endowed with talent and facility and yet without the moral backbone to bring his gifts to fruition. It is remarkable that though his activities were confined almost entirely to composition and only incidentally to teaching, whereas Tovey

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Harty were composers only incidentally, his personality seems much more shadowy than that of either of the two older men. Whereas they had the courage of their convictions in general musicianship, and in their compositions were unpretentiously content with the idom they were born to, Bridge squandered very great gifts of musicianship through failing to decide what kind of stature he aimed at and what sort of idiom was his by inheritance, so that if Harty's music belongs to a generation that is lost to *us* Bridge's music produces in us an uneasy feeling that he was continually lost to himself. Tovey and Harty, although conservatives in composition, had an intelligence and self-knowledge that forestalled pretension and ambiguity: but Bridge was even conservatively unconservative, writing music in whatever mode happened to be fashionable at the moment—now nineteenth-century academic with folky flavour, now Debussy-cum-Scriabin chromatics, finally even atonalism, just to show, apparently, that he too could do it. Through all the twists of the weather-vane the only stable element is something that amounts to little more than synthetic John Ireland, the one English composer to exert any pervasive influence on Bridge and one whose mannerisms are dangerously easy to acquire. But the 'little more,' if it exists, is the point, and I do not mean that Bridge's music is necessarily feebler than Tovey's or Harty's; it may be a good deal more interesting. His conservatism argues, of course, a not very powerful personality; but it is a very delicate task to tell, with a composer who adheres so closely to the veneer of other composer's manners, just how far the manner is used and how far it is a substitute for an original impulse —to tell, for instance, whether there is only a Scriabinesque paraphanalia of tragedy in the Piano Trio—all the superimposed appogiaturas and garish stage-trappings—but none of the tragic substance.

Often I think there is a very real talent in the melodic ideas; but beautiful and striking phrases are not enough to make a composition.[3] Bridge's ideas are too frequently seeds which fail to germinate; they do not grow but some gimcrack floral decoration (copied from last year's fashions) is tied to them with an art that becomes artifice, until the original impulse, which was genuine, becomes submerged beneath a façade of other men's gestures. The explanation is, I think, a deficiency of character—of what I earlier

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

called moral backbone; and too much of Bridge's music demonstrates how those two apparent opposites, the academic and the fashionable, are but two aspects of the same disease of psittacosis. ' Nothing is easier,' as Tovey said, ' than to classify musical art-forms and set up their criteria as if they were ideals that existed before the music was made for them '; all Bridge's imitative facility has nothing to do with his being or not being an artist.

I believe it is significant that Bridge's best work should have been done in the medium which offers least opportunity for more or less extramusical ' effects '—namely the string quartet. The second is a fine vigorous work in Bridge's least chromatic, most traditional (as distinct from academic) vein, while the Fourth, superficially influenced by the Schönbergians, uses the angular leaps and nervous dissonances of that idiom to aggravate an impulse that remains Bridge's own and essentially lyrical. With an habitual technical adroitness the idiom is more freely independent, and therefore more mature, than that of any of Bridge's works of a comparable seriousness. Perhaps, when he died, Bridge was on the point of discovering a language that would have been adequate to, and would thereby to some extent have relieved, the limiting instability of his temperament: an idiom developing in a logical if nervous and highly-strung manner that lyrical feeling which was in earlier works fragmentary and fleeting, but nonetheless the essence, beneath the eclecticism, of his sensibility and his character as an 'English ' rather than an academic and/or fashionable composer. It is no accident that Bridge—an artist representative of the twentieth century in so far as he indicates how conservatism and fashion are secret allies in league against Tradition—should finally have come to terms with a technique which, whatever its potentialities or restrictions, can, apart from mere insular prejudice, with justice be dubbed ' un-English.'

W. H. MELLERS.

---

[3] *cf.* Tovey: ' The teaching of composition and the understanding of music would be greatly advanced if a law were made forbidding the assertion that Beethoven's C minor Symphony is founded on a figure of four notes. Melodies are not built up out of figures. They are large musical objects which are divisible into figures.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A CRITICAL THEORY OF JANE AUSTEN'S WRITINGS

(II)

'LADY SUSAN' INTO 'MANSFIELD PARK'

'MANSFIELD PARK' as we know it arrived I believe through (at least) three stages, and studying the process of its evolution will help the literary critic in several respects. It will give us an insight into the process of artistic creation, even when that has passed, as in Jane Austen's case, for a miraculous achievement; it will enable us to account for the unsatisfactory effect and puzzling anomalies of *Mansfield Park* itself; and it will put us in possession of some interesting information about its author which may help us to understand better Jane Austen's other novels. *Mansfield Park*, though published with the later half of her novels and known to have been written well on in the maturer part of her writing life, is nevertheless generally felt (by those capable of feeling critically about the Austen novels) to be less satisfactory in many ways than any of the others—notably contrasting with a ' pure ' work of art like its successor *Emma*. It has many puzzling features, the most pronounced perhaps being its vein of priggishness with outbreaks of a disconcerting kind of cynicism—for instance, characters who are for the most part advanced for our respectful admiration or esteem are also handled at moments with brutality or contempt. There is a marked unevenness in the tone of the narrative, and there is equally a difference in the style—while there is a good deal of the too-easy irony of *Sense and Sensibility* and of the lumpy Johnsonese of the two novels previous to *Mansfield Park*, yet here not merely phrases but whole passages are clothed in a new, a religious idiom—the state of mind that numbered Sunday travelling amongst Mr. Elliot's vices appears for the first time and in the centre of the undertaking. There is some equivocation in the very heart of the book, in that part of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moral drama represented by Mary Crawford; there is a disparity between what she does and is represented as being, on the one hand, and what she is accused of, the basis for the feelings displayed towards her by the author, on the other—the author is evidently not in this case the detached and impartial presenter that she is elsewhere seen to be. There is a personal animus manifested against Mary Crawford, in fact, which seeps through the book as irritation trying to justify itself on the highest grounds: how does it happen that such an artist is in the power of such an emotion? Then again, *Mansfield Park* is the most upsetting novel to those who give the conventional account of Miss Austen and insist on describing the interest she excites in the usual crass terms.[1] Some other anomalies should be mentioned here: the disparity between the expressed intention of writing the novel on the theme of Ordination and the actual theme's turning out to be quite different, was cited in the previous instalment of this article, along with the disconcerting last chapter. There is also something odd about the form of the novel altogether, with which I shall deal in its place, as well as an astonishing contrast in form and tone with *Pride and Prejudice,* with the composition of which it overlapped—the one so sparkling and dramatic, the other low in vitality, as it were, and depending very little on dramatic scenes in its narration. The priggishness of the book is of a special kind, not just the occasional schoolmarmy effects of *Sense and Sensibility* which there are only the result of artistic inexperience (for the same kind of points are made effectively in *Persuasion* without any impression of preaching) —in *Mansfield Park* the morality is almost deliberately conventional and the moralizing unbelievably trite, yet there are also savage outbreaks against conventional moralizing and socially approved behaviour. Those who have read in the *Life and Letters* of the Austens' theatricals will have asked themselves why Jane should

[1] *e.g.,* the account of her work in Vol. III, edited by Professor Dobrée, of *Introductions to English Literature* (1940): 'Unlike Scott she cared more for her art than its subject . . . She would change nothing and is content to enjoy . . . She knows more than her characters do but not so much as to make us feel that their shortcomings are not exhibited rather for our delight than for our edification.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be so hot in *Mansfield Park* against amateur acting, and that too of a play at least as unexceptionable as some of those performed at Steventon Rectory. Another stumbling-block is the heroine Fanny Price: it has been frequently remarked that whereas all the other heroines of our author are young women of character, this one is the approved heroine of the novel of the time—with her ill-health, delicate nerves, superstitious respect for authority and conventional moral squeamishness. Yet she is championed by the author as ' my Fanny,' a personal relation not accorded even to Elizabeth Bennett or Anne Elliot.

I.

Lady Susan, untitled and undated, survives in manuscript, the paper on which it was written bearing a watermark of 1805. But as Dr. Chapman describes it this is ' not a draft but a fair copy. It is beautifully written, almost free from correction or erasure ' —very different in fact from the manuscript of *Sanditon* which is certainly a first draft. There was apparently a family tradition that *Lady Susan* was a very early composition (mentioned both in the *Memoir* of Jane's nephew and the *Life and Letters* by her later relations), contemporary with *First Impressions* and *Elinor and Marianne*, though this may be merely a deduction from its being composed in letter form. But I think we can decide on internal evidence that it was founded on events of the years 1795 to 1797, and was certainly written before the end of 1797. The manuscript of 1805 or later was the usual revision after a period of years. This we may call the first stage. No explanation has been advanced, I believe, why Jane Austen, who destroyed *First Impressions*, *Elinor and Marianne*, and the earlier versions of the novel finally published as *Northanger Abbey*, preserved this manuscript, though she made no attempt at any time to publish it. I think we may conclude that it was of unique interest for her, like *The Watsons* and the three manuscript volumes of her early writings. No reference to it is to be found in her letters, nor anywhere else, but we can form a pretty accurate idea of its conception.

Lady Susan has attracted little attention from the critics, who have been too uniformly repelled by what they have agreed to call its ' bitter ' or ' cynical ' tone to discover in it the matrix of *Mansfield Park*, though it was first published as early as 1871, appended

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the second edition of James Austen-Leigh's *Memoir*. Chesterton seems merely to have voiced an unspoken consensus of opinion when he wrote in his Introduction to *Love and Freindship*: 'I for one would willingly have left *Lady Susan* in the waste-paper basket.' The general reader has thus been headed off an interesting and frequently very entertaining piece of work. The unpleasant quality so painfully evident in the uneven *Mansfield Park* is actually not to be traced to *Lady Susan*, which is merely stamped (as we may be sure *First Impressions* and *Elinor and Marianne* were, and as *Northanger Abbey* still is even after three revisions) by a perceptible unsympathy with *all* the characters, an impatience to jot them down and rough out their rôles and emotional relations so as to see if the desired total effect has been secured: like *The Watsons*, *Lady Susan* is a novelist's working draft and not meant for print, though like that story its deceptive appearance of completeness has encouraged its acceptance as an entity, and it has not even such very obvious links with its descendant as *The Watsons* has with *Emma*. A close knowledge of *Lady Susan* can hardly be assumed therefore, so I will make no apology for a summary. The scene is between a great country-house, Churchill, the home of the Vernons, a wealthy and virtuous couple in the story-book mode, and London, the London of fashionable society in contrast. The link between the two is Lady Susan Vernon. The story is told entirely in letters except for a concluding chapter where the epistolary convention is cast off with explicit satire (we recall the jibes at that convention in the first two MS. volumes), and the story is wound up impatiently in the manner of the ends of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park*. Lady Susan in the first letter is inviting herself to Churchill, where she is suspiciously received by her sister-in-law Catherine Vernon and that lady's young brother Reginald De Courcy. We have two sets of correspondence thenceforward, one between Catherin Vernon and her mother and the other between Lady Susan and her confidante in Town, the unpleasant Mrs. Johnson. Lady Susan, recently widowed, with a daughter Frederica of sixteen, is a beautiful and well-bred Becky Sharp. Finding Reginald has been 'taught' [with justice] 'to consider her a very distinguished Flirt' she sets about conquering him just as she has already imposed on Mr. Vernon in spite of his wife; she attaches any man who comes her way on principle, in case he may

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come in useful, but she is first piqued by Reginald's hostility and then, after capturing him, thinks he may be worth marrying. Mrs. Vernon's sisterly anguishes and laments (she is never for a moment taken in by Lady Susan's ' bewitching powers ') are most amusingly sent off to her mother, recording every turn in Reginald's relations with Lady Susan. These soon become involved as Frederica turns up at Churchill to her mother's discomfort, and has to be explained away as intractable and deficient. Actually Frederica is shy, gentle, tender-hearted, pretty in a style contrasting with her mother's beauty, ' totally without accomplishment,' but fond of books, and though she has always been neglected by her mother and left to servants is surprisingly endowed with Principles. She soon falls in love with the high-minded Reginald. A foolish young man of great estate, Sir James Martin, whom Lady Susan intends to force Frederica to marry, pursues them to Churchill. Frederica appeals by letter to Reginald to use his influence with her mother to save her from a wretched marriage, and in consequence Reginald has a temporary breach with Lady Susan, soon healed however by her artful explanations. She goes off to London, followed by Reginald whom she has all along managed to persuade into believing her to be what he would like to think her. But she is in a fix. She can hardly make up her mind to sacrifice her liberty for marriage with a man she despises who is moreover dependent on his father; besides, there is another man, Manwaring, with whom she is having an affair, but he is married à la Willoughby to Mr. Johnson's rich ward, and she would prefer to marry him if only his wife could be disposed of (plaguing her to death from jealousy is the method Lady Susan is actually adopting). Reginald and Manwaring have of course to be kept out of each other's way, and this she manages, but by an improbable coincidence when Reginald presents his introduction to Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Manwaring forces her way in to confide her jealous suspicions of Lady Susan to her guardian. Even after this ' provoking Eclaircissement ' Lady Susan still hopes to argue Reginald into believing in her against appearances, but as he writes to her, his ' Understanding is at length restored,' and after a brilliant pair of letters to him from Lady Susan she is obliged to extricate herself from poverty and scandal by marrying Sir James Martin, throwing Frederica on the Vernons' hands. This leaves Reginald and Frederica to console each other

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after a suitable period, ironically looked forward to by the author in her conclusion in the first person.

What are the essentials of the situation noted down in this convenient form for future use? There is first the contrast between London and Churchill, the one, represented by Lady Susan and her set, standing for heartlessness, interested marriages, hypocrisy and vice in general, the other, represented by the Vernons and De Courcys, standing for honesty, heart, 'principles,' Virtue of the conventional order of the age as exhibited with approval in *Camilla* and *Belinda,* Jane Austen's model novels. Lady Susan's daughter surprisingly belongs to the latter camp, and though as matters stand her possession at sixteen of 'Principles . . . not to be injured even by her Mother, or all her Mother's friends' is preposterous, we note it as a convenience for signifying that Frederica is to contrast with her mother morally as well as to stand in rivalry with her for the hero's affections, to which she is to succeed. Next, there is roughed out the character of the principal. She is a woman of fashion who despises the country and expects to be bored there and who feels superior to country people with their rustic morality and simple minds; she is a widow still young and very attractive who lives on her charms and intends if possible to make a good marriage, though she values her recently acquired liberty and is in two minds about surrendering it. She is not at all a stock character, as the others are, who are merely indicated in relation to Lady Susan and her intrigues. Thirdly, there is the situation created by Lady Susan's irruption into the life of Churchill: the hero oscillating between doubts as to the reality of his idealization of Lady Susan, his self-deception, and his uncertainly of his mistress's affection for him, is watched by a sister in more than sisterly distress (with the added exasperation of a woman whose husband is being imposed on by a sister-in-law), and whose feelings are set down with more than the requisite exactness; parallel to this sister's, we have reported the feelings of the subordinate heroine, Frederica, who similarly watches the hero deceiving himself all round, but watches with the despair of a hopeless passion. Finally, there is the hero's undeception through a lucky accident, with consolation to hand. To preserve these fruitful notes was clearly the reason why *Lady Susan* was put together, with so much carelessness in regard to plausibility of action and so much care in some other respects.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We must now turn to real life. The biography of Jane's exotic cousin Eliza Hancock received a good deal of space in the *Life and Letters* and it has often been conjectured that she gave some hints for the character of Lady Susan, whom she resembled in a delight in exercising her powers on the opposite sex; she married at the age of twenty the Comte de Feuillide, who was guillotined in 1794. Thereupon she returned to England and at the end of 1797 married Jane's favourite brother Henry, she being then thirty-six (Lady Susan was about thirty-five). The *Life and Letters* hints that Henry's engagement to ' his very pleasure-loving cousin ' was unfavourably received by the Austens, particularly as she was ten years his senior (Lady Susan was twelve years old than Reginald De Courcy) and had a son. But they were married immediately; the courtship, according to Eliza's letter to her godfather Warren Hastings, was of nearly as long standing as her widowhood, for she speaks of ' an acquiescence which I have witheld for more than two years.' [Lady Susan had been ' scarcely ten months a widow ' when she captured Reginald.] Letters of hers exist showing that she had Lady Susan's [and Mary Crawford's] attitude to the country as opposed to town life, and that she found it hard to decide to surrender her liberty by remarrying. That she was like Lady Susan an adventuress or an unnatural mother or of bad character has never been suggested, and in fact Jane was a great favourite of her's in her girlhood, which suggests a mutual preference. But the situation of Eliza's flirtations with Jane's much-admired brother[2] (family tradition suggests two brothers, that James Austen's second wife—whom he married in the same year as Eliza did Henry—never forgave Eliza in consequence) was evidently the occasion of the draft for a novel. Originally jotted down in the period of the courtship but before the marriage was decided on, I imagine, it was later preserved in the fair copy we know as *Lady Susan*. An extension of the family tradition on this matter has providentially been made known by a grandson of Jane's elder brother Francis. Incredible as it may seem, in 1928 Mr. John F.

[2]If not the favourite like Charles he was certainly the most congenial of her brothers, later managing her literary business. The *Life and Letters* states that there was ' a special link ' between Jane and Henry from infancy.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hubback writing in *The Cornhill* on 'Pen Portraits in Jane Austen's Novels' is able to record what he heard his mother and aunt tell of their favourite 'Aunt Jane,' and the background of her life. He makes an important addition to the story of Eliza: that when she came to England in 1794 she returned to Steventon as a place of refuge and 'it was not long before theatricals were resumed. Eliza's experiences at Versailles, and subsequent changes of fortune, had endowed her character with many new traits, sometimes almost clashing with each other. Their elder brother, Henry, was again Eliza's co-adjutor in the play-acting, and the outcome was that he became her husband in 1797. It has been stated that her refusal of James Austen in her youth was on account of his being destined for the Church, but this may be merely family tradition . . .[3] Henry Austen had also the wish to take orders before he fell in love with Eliza, but we hear no more of this until his actual ordination took place in 1816, three years after Eliza's life ended.' I may add that Henry became a divine of marked evangelical outlook.

To drag in biography like this is of course only justifiable in literary criticism when it serves either to illuminate strictly critical problems or when it helps to show how an artist works on raw material, and in this case biography seems to me to do both. Three of the four aspects of the *Lady Susan* story I have listed are comprised in the situation caused by the Comtesse de Feuillide's irruption into the tranquil life of Steventon Rectory, though the situation has been simplified and her character heightened. One guesses that the alterations were made both in order to avoid an emotional or personal treatment of a sore[4] and delicate subject and

---

[3]As James Austen was only sixteen when Eliza married the Comte de Feuillide, there is evidently some confusion here. The period when James was possibly Henry's rival for Eliza's hand was during her widowhood and when James was a widower, at which period James had long been in holy orders. But she may have been prejudiced against James on that account; he re-married earlier in the same year that saw Henry's long courtship rewarded, and his wife, Mary Lloyd, Anna's step-mother, seems to have borne Eliza an otherwise unaccountable ill-will.

[4]'I have never yet found that the advice of a Sister could prevent a young Man's being in love if he chose it'—*Lady Susan*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in order to make effective in a brief space something that the still immature writer knew not how to consign to paper in other than bold outline and satiric terms.

The authors of the *Life and Letters* remark that 'Strictly speaking it [*Lady Susan*] is not a story but a study . . . [of] the one full-length, highly finished, wholly sinister figure which occupies the canvas, but which seems, with the completion of the study, to have disappeared entirely from the mind of its creator.' But as we have seen, such things did not disappear from the mind of their creator. Jane Austen simply put *Lady Susan* by until it could be used as part of a larger and subtler scheme. In 1808 she brought it out again and, just as *The Watsons* was later rewritten as *Emma*, as I have shown, she started to rewrite *Lady Susan* as *Mansfield Park*. *Mansfield Park* as we have it is known with some exactness to have been written between February, 1811, and June or July, 1813, on Jane's own statement, and I had better say at once that history does not record any previous draft. My supposition of such a version rest on two pieces of evidence. Firstly, the dating of *Mansfield Park* is not that of the time it was 'written,' but answers to the years 1808 and 1809. Jane Austen did not construct her novels on a strict calendar basis for any reason but her own convenience (as Dr. Chapman observes, the reader is not even expected to notice the clues to the precise dating in the novels) and no writer in these circumstances is going to hunt up old calendars to use when the current ones are handy and will answer equally well. Neither had she reason to bother about changing the date-scheme when rewriting for publication.

Secondly, there seems to me quite obviously an overlaid epistolary novel behind the version of *Mansfield Park* that we have. The dimmed and distant effect of much of this novel, the impression it gives of low spirits in its presentation, is due, I suggest, to its being retold from letters. A good deal of *Mansfield Park* reads like paraphrases of letters, and, once the action is launched with the young people grown up, a very great deal actually is letters or summaries of them, and bridge-passages between letters or summaries of letters. There are loose ends due to submerged confidants, confidants who were indispensable to the earlier novel conducted in letters. Among these we may probably class Mary Crawford's London friends Mrs. Fraser and her sister Lady Stornaway (the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

descendants of Lady Susan's correspondant Mrs. Johnson) and certainly Sir Thomas's ' old and most particular friend in London,' Mr. Harding, who is sprung upon the reader as the Mansfield source of information of the Rushworth-Crawford scandal. The flatness of breaking such an event in reports of two successive letters from a hitherto unknown character is such that no novelist could possibly have sat down and thought it up voluntarily, much less the author of *Pride and Prejudice;* it is a device necessitated by the epistolary novel that *Mansfield Park* had been. The same crisis is imparted separately to Fanny partly in a letter from Mary and partly in another letter from Edmund in addition to the paragraph Mr. Price reads from his newspaper; nothing is gained from the author's point of view by telling it twice over, once to Mansfield and once to Portsmouth, but repeating a piece of news all round is another disadvantage entailed by writing a novel in letters, as we may see *ad nauseam* in Richardson. [We notice the same clumsiness in the two separate announcements first of Lucy Steele's engagement to Edmund when it comes out, and then of her marriage to Robert; *Sense and Sensibility* too was originally composed in letters.] Sir Thomas then goes up to London himself and sends successive letters home about the affairs of Maria and Julia, duly repeated to Fanny in letters from Edmund. There are two accounts in letters of Henry's first meeting with Mrs. Rushworth in Wimpole Street, but no dramatic scene between them at all. Nor is there anything of the other drama conducted in London between Edmund and Mary except retrospectively in Edmund's reports to Fanny. Characters are separated and distributed about the country for little other reason than that they may write to one another. Fanny's going to Portsmouth, which has been condemned by critics on aesthetic grounds as marring the unity of the novel, was, I believe, devised for the 1808-9 version as an opportunity for all the Bertram and Crawford complications to be cleared up in letters to and from Fanny, leaving only a Conclusion by the author to wind up, a conclusion differing from that of *Lady Susan* only in having more characters to polish off. And this is precisely what we have in the last chapter of *Mansfield Park,* with the addition of some moral top-dressing in 1813, the irreverence and oddity of which chapter has always worried the more devout Austenites. We can in fact postulate an epistolary form of *Mansfield Park* on internal evidence alone

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as we could not have deduced the existence of a similar precursor from *Sense and Sensibility*: yet even though we know such a precursor in letter form did exist, in *Elinor and Marianne*, we cannot make out what that was like, as we can make out an epistolary *Mansfield Park*.

I hope I have established at any rate the existence of a precursor in letter form to *Mansfield Park*. But I have still to show that it was an intermediary between *Lady Susan* and *Mansfield Park*, stories whose plot, intrigues and characterization are superficially so different. I hope the reader will bear in mind the demonstration in the last number of *Scrutiny* of how *The Watsons* became *Emma*. Precisely the same process can be demonstrated here, though much more richly and subtly, but not always so consciously, in action. The quotation from Mr. Hubback's important reminiscences links Eliza de Feuillide with *Lady Susan* as regards her personality and the situation she created in the Austen family, but, as the reader may have noticed, it also links Eliza with *Mansfield Park* by way of the theatricals and the ordination business. This however is only external and not evidence in the field of literary criticism. Let us now turn to the two documents, *Lady Susan* and *Mansfield Park*.

We have the same antithesis between worldliness on the one hand, comprising deceit, heartlessness, and marriages of convenience, and backed by London, and on the other Principles, unworldly sincerity and warmth of feeling. Mansfield stands for ' heart ' to the worldly Miss Crawford, and though like Lady Susan she comes into the country as a *pis aller* expecting to be bored, she is impressed in spite of herself by the Mansfield virtues—' You have all so much more *heart* among you, than one finds in the world at large. You all give me a feeling of being able to trust and confide in you; which, in common intercourse, one knows nothing of,' Mary Crawford confides to Fanny when about to return to her London friends. Lady Susan's set—' a very bad set '—*is* Mary Crawford's, the description by Edmund of Mrs. Fraser and by Miss Crawford of Mr. Fraser answering exactly to the accounts of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson in the earlier book, down to replacing Mrs. Manwaring's sister-in-law Maria who was trying desperately to catch the baronet by Mrs. Fraser's step-daughter Margaret who was wild to marry Henry. The noble match Sir James Martin, ' under par,' ' no Solomon,' ' a very weak young man,' ' only a fool,' becomes

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Rushworth, both having the advantage of a good appearance and ' person.' Sir Reginald De Courcy, who is represented by a strong paternal letter pointing out (too late) the folly of his son's falling in love with Lady Susan, provides the groundwork for Sir Thomas Bertram. ' You know your own rights, and that it is out of my power to prevent your inheriting the family Estate. My Ability of distressing you during my Life, would be a species of revenge to which I should hardly stoop under any circumstances. I honestly tell you my Sentiments and Intentions. I do not wish to work on your Fears, but on your Sense and Affection. It would destroy every comfort of my Life, to know that you were married to Lady Susan Vernon. It would be the death of that honest Pride, with which I have hitherto considered my son, I should blush to see him, to hear of him, to think of him.' We recognize the intonation of Sir Thomas blushing for his son Tom, the dignified accents of virtue consciously founded on good sense and right feeling. In addition to the principal situations carried over, which I have summarized earlier, there are many others adapted as we have seen Jane Austen adapting before. For instance, the guilt and vice in the centre of *Lady Susan* are removed to the edge with Maria, the wanton seduction of a married man, Manwaring, by Lady Susan being altered to Mrs. Rushworth's seduction by Henry Crawford. Sir James's proposals are forced on Frederica by her mother as a good worldly match and his attentions encouraged against her will as Henry Crawford's are for Fanny by her uncle for the same reason; in both cases the same piece is used when the interested spectator (Mrs. Vernon, Edmund) observes that the only possibility of encouragement in the girl's behaviour rests upon embarrassment and consciousness. But we will leave smaller likenesses[5] to grapple with the central changes.

I have said before that in general the point when Jane Austen's immature draft becomes in conception the novel as we know it is

[5]Here is one of many in language. The Miss Manwaring who has designs on Sir James Martin is said to be ' absolutely on the catch for a husband.' Mrs. Norris uses the same term, of which there is no other instance I believe in any of her novels, in connection with Mr. Rushworth, who replaces Sir James—' there were girls enough on the catch for him.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when the author changes her treatment so that from being outside, in a relation of satiric superiority to her characters and their involvements, she is to be found inside. What the critics have really meant in calling *Lady Susan* unpleasant is that a general callousness on the author's part, a belittling of *all* the actors in the drama, is apparent. The launching of *Mansfield Park* was when Jane Austen decided to move Lady Susan out of the centre of the picture and adopt the point of view on the drama of the passive Frederica, who had been exhibited only at second-hand in other people's letters, a dummy not in the original domestic drama of Steventon Rectory but invented for the novelist to illuminate and offset Lady Susan. We can see how this was inevitable. Instead of the ironical external position of the author of anti-romance she has to identify herself with the consciousness of a heroine (as she does in every novel but *Northanger Abbey*, which remains primarily a squib); it couldn't be the amoral Lady Susan's so it must be either Mrs. Vernon's (too entirely sisterly to be interesting) or Frederica's (too simple, she being only the consolation-prize for the hero). What she did in fact was to combine the two. Frederica had to be the exact opposite to her mother; with her mild eyes and pensive countenance, her ' artless affection ' for Reginald, her ' excellent disposition,' her ' romantic tender-heartedness which will always ensure her misery enough,' her shyness which prevents her ' ever doing justice to herself ' (' there cannot be a more gentle, affectionate heart, or more obliging manners, when acting without restraint '), her lack of accomplishments but love of books, and her Principles that Mrs. Vernon surprisingly (considering her mother and her upbringing) finds to be her strong point, she is in essentials Fanny Price. But Fanny also inherits Mrs. Vernon's position as Reginald's devoted sister who has to hear and see all his ups and downs of feeling, all his doubts and self deceptions, and who sets down her reflections and forebodings and anger at Lady Susan for her mother's benefit, just as Fanny's reactions to Edmund's similar confidences about Miss Crawford are set down for us. The passive girl in love with a successful rival always before her, and the exasperated sister, are fused in Fanny who is at once witness and confidante, sister and lover; it is through her sensibility that we feel what passes between Edmund and Mary Crawford, and she inherits from Mrs. Vernon ' the perpetual irritation of knowing his [Edmund's] heart.' To

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make plausible the sisterly part (which is constantly stressed), the background in time was contrived that accounts for the more than cousinly relation between Edmund and Fanny and the peculiar bond of feeling between them. It was necessary for the complicated purposes of this novel to root the Fanny-Edmund relation more deeply than the casual throwing together of Henry Tilney and Catherine Morland or of Reginald De Courcy and Frederica that produces an immediate attachment on the girl's side, that can hardly be taken very seriously, so we have the history of Fanny's childhood—the only childhood and growth of a heroine in Jane Austen's work—to account for her unusual position in Edmund's life that combines Mrs. Vernon's interest and Frederica's. It is significant that the hero is saved from marrying the object of his infatuation in both stories. unlike life.

We can again see Jane Austen expanding and enriching her draft by working in material from her early writings and her correspondence. Frederica was in *Lady Susan* a victim, abused by her mother; she attracts an earlier victim, the Maria Williams who wrote Letter the Third in ' A Collection of Letters ' in the second MS. volume, which I described in the previous article. The downtrodden Maria Williams with her poor home combines with Frederica to produce Fanny Price,[6] bringing with her, to do the victimizing, the bullying and nagging aspects of Lady Greville; we have in *Mansfield Park* not only Mrs. Norris but the very carriage incident from that early Letter, rooted into the new work as I have shown. Fanny demands our sympathy not only on the grounds that Frederica did but also as being in the situation of Maria Williams.

For Lady Susan was not available as a dragon. The girl of twenty or so who drafted the domestic drama into the crude story in letters had given place to a woman of six and thirty with conscious artistic powers. She was aiming at a record of that experience both truer and nearer to life, and we may see a return

[6]Price is the same order of name as Williams, and names meant a great deal to Jane Austen. She appears to have had a sort of private catalogue and dictionary of them, shared with her family, and most of those used in the MS. volumes reappear in the novels, mostly with similar associations.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the original source of the story in several important respects, notably in the figure of Mary Crawford, both a more usual and a more subtle character than Lady Susan[7]. In accordance with a tendency we have noticed before in Jane Austen when rewriting, Lady Susan is split up into two characters. The deliberate vice in her character is transferred to Mary's brother—his past career is hinted like hers, with its satisfaction in going about breaking hearts —' the freaks of a cold-blooded vanity,' used of Henry Crawford's conduct ' is actually a perfect description of Lady Susan's occupations as we are shown them. Her powers of intrigue and ability to play a part are made over to Henry, while the description of the polished and insinuating Manwaring supplies his personality, combined with Henry Austen's temperament. But the function of Lady Susan, to beguile the hero and torment him, is made over to another version of Eliza de Feuillide and one both more sympathetic and more in keeping with history. From start to finish the courses of Mary Crawford and ' the captivating Lady Susan ' are alike in their relation to the hero,[8] except that Mary Crawford is blameless. Edmund is not the dupe of Miss Crawford in the sense that Reginald was the dupe of Lady Susan. Edmund—much more subtly presented—is the dupe only of his own wishes, and though like Reginald he refuses to see what is before him it is not because he

---

[7]Lady Susan as a mother is sometimes held, with great likelihood, to have come from a neighbour's family history. Jane's friends the Lloyds (two of whom married her brothers later) had had a grandmother, Mrs. Craven, notorious for her unnatural behaviour to her daughters, who were forced to elope from their home. The cruel Mrs. Craven was a beauty and moved in society. Her story would be well known to the Austens, and could be amalgamated with Eliza's in the manner congenial to Jane when adapting from life. It is significant that Mrs. Craven was thrown out again when in *Mansfield Park* she returned to the story of her brother and cousin as it had affected herself.

[8]For instance, Mary had originally intended to marry the eligible Tom, as Lady Susan had thought of marrying Sir James before turning him over to her daughter, and Lady Susan's explanation of her change of views—' but I must own myself rather romantic in that respect, and that Riches only will not satisfy me '—is what

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has a clever hypocrite to blind him. 'She is clever and agreeable, has all that knowledge of the world which makes conversation easy, and talks very well, with a happy command of language, which is too often used I believe to make Black appear White.' So might Fanny have written to her brother of Miss Crawford, for whom she has the same distrust from the start that Mrs. Vernon had for Lady Susan, but it is actually Mrs. Vernon's description when writing to her brother of her sister-in-law. Like Reginald, Edmund starts by suspicion and disapproval, but he is won over against his judgment to find himself in the same uneasy position of having to justify a prepossession of which he is ashamed by sophistry: 'but against reason, against conviction, to be so well pleased with her as I am sure he is, does really astonish me . . . when he has mentioned her of late, it has been in terms of more extraordinary praise, and yesterday he actually said, that he could not be surprised at any effect produced on the heart of Man by such loveliness and such abilities; and when I lamented in reply the badness of her disposition, he observed that whatever might have been her errors, they were to be imputed to her neglected education and that altogether she was a wonderful woman. This tendency to excuse her conduct, or to forget it in the warmth of admiration vexes me . . .' Thus Mrs. Vernon lamented, but so might Fanny have done,

---

Mary's failure to satisfy herself with Tom Bertram amounts to. Again, Lady Susan's attention to Reginald, like Mary's flirtation with Edmund, is not at first meant by either lady to lead anywhere. The contest of wills, expressed in conflicting moral attitudes, remains the fundamental feature in the situation between hero and siren in both stories. It is Mary who says, referring to Edmund's change of attitude about the play-acting: 'His sturdy spirit to bend as it did! Oh, it was sweet beyond expression,' but Lady Susan who had aimed explicitly at subjugating Reginald's will and who says: 'There is exquisite pleasure in subduing an insolent spirit,' etc. The clash between incompatible moral values is in both books the rock on which the relation between the two people founders. In life matters seem to have worked out happily enough, but a sister may be pardoned for having felt, like Fanny, 'He will marry her, and be poor and miserable. God grant that her influence do not make him cease to be respectable!'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and in similar terms she does actually feel and protest to Edmund. We are given identical glimpses of Fanny's feelings: 'But he was deceived in her; he gave her merits which she had not; her faults were what they had even been, but he saw them no longer. Till she had shed many tears over this deception Fanny could not subdue her agitation . . .'

Reginald follows Lady Susan to London, as Edmund goes there after Mary, whereupon his sister writes to their mother: 'The probability of their marrying is surely heightened. He is more securely hers than ever . . . I have done with Lamentation. I look upon the Event as so far decided, that I resign myself to it in despair. If he leaves you soon for London, everything will be concluded'; Fanny reflects: '. . . the more deeply she recollected and observed, the more deeply was she convinced that every thing was now in a fairer train for Miss Crawford's marrying Edmund than it had ever been before.—On his side, the inclination was stronger, on hers less equivocal. His objections, the scruples of his integrity, seemed all done away with—nobody could tell how . . . It could only be imputed to increasing attachment . . . He was to go to town . . . he talked of going, he loved to talk of it; and when once with her again, Fanny could not doubt the rest.—Her acceptance must be as certain as his offer; and yet there were feelings still remaining which made the prospect of it most sorrowful to her, independently—she believed independently, of self.' There are many such close parallels, and it is hardly necessary to point out that the changes show an increased psychological interest on the author's part, both the desire and the ability to probe deeper into feelings and motives and the reasonings of the heart.

A similar change is shown in the *dénouement*. Lady Susan is found out by a clumsy accident which depends on an unlikely combination of circumstances. Edmund is undeceived about Mary by the logical working out of the drama. It is Mary's brother who is guilty like Lady Susan, but in Edmund's eyes Mary is involved almost equally when he discovers she shares her brother's moral outlook; Edmund feels about the revelation of her character as Reginald did on finding out *his* mistress's, there is the same sense of 'seeing through' a beloved object and the same shame at having been taken in. Reginald writes to Lady Susan: 'The spell is removed. I see you as you are.' Edmund says: 'But the charm

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is broken. My eyes are opened.' Reginald wrote: ' . . . the most mortifying conviction of the Imposition I have been under and the absolute necessity of an immediate and eternal separation.' Edmund said ' most grievously convinced me that I had never understood her before, and that, as far as related to mind, it had been a creature of my own imagination not Miss Crawford, that I had been too apt to dwell on for many months past . . . How have I been deceived!' Both ladies reply with levity and contemptuous resentment instead of contrition. Mary had actually thought Edmund worth marrying only when his elder brother seemed likely to die; Lady Susan had only thought Reginald worth marrying if his father should die quickly. It has been objected that a quick-witted woman like Mary Crawford would not in writing to Fanny expose her desire that Tom should die so that Edmund will be eligible enough for her, but she does so because Lady Susan had debated in letters with *her* confidante whether Reginald's father's death would decide her to marry the heir.

It is hardly necessary to show that Reginald became Edmund alike in situation and character. Reginald was already the ingenuous (and therefore easily imposed on) youth required as the siren's victim and in order to provide the moral drama he has to have a make-up antithetic to hers. Lady Susan writes to her friend of him: ' There is a sort of ridiculous delicacy about him which requires the fullest explanation of whatever he may have heard to my disadvantage, and is never satisfied till he thinks he has ascertained the beginning and end of everything.' She writes with contempt of ' the inquisitive and doubting Fancies of that Heart which always seems debating on the reasonableness of its Emotions,' and with irritation of his ' spirit . . . resulting from a fancied sense of superior Integrity.' She has had, she writes, to ' subdue him entirely by sentiment and serious conversation, and made him I may venture to say at least half in Love with me, without the semblance of the most common-place flirtation.'[9] He is, she complains, ' compara-

[9]This idea was not wasted. Out of keeping with Mary's part, it was worked into Henry's in the last rewriting of the book. We actually have a scene (after dinner at Mansfield in Vol. III, Ch. 3) where we hear Henry endeavouring to subdue Fanny in the same way, and almost the same description is given as above: ' This would be the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tively deficient in the power of saying those delightful things which put one in good humour with oneself and the world.'[10] Edmund develops out of Reginald by the addition of the Ordination theme, which will be mentioned later, but where did Reginald come from? If Mary Crawford was Eliza he ought to have been Henry Austen, but what we know of the volatile Henry, the brilliant talker, the lively wit, the man of the world of the family, corresponds with the favourable aspects of Henry Crawford (the name is again a clue here),[11] and no one who reads Jane's letter about her brother on losing his wife Eliza (' Upon the whole his spirits are very much recovered. If I may so express myself his mind is not a mind for affliction; he is too busy, too active, too sanguine ')[12] can suppose

---

way to win Fanny. She was not to be won by all that gallantry and wit, and good nature together, could do . . . without the assistance of sentiment and feeling, and seriousness on serious subjects.' As this scene is connected with the ordination subject, and is dramatic, it must have been written into the final version.

[10]With these last two quotations compare Ch. 7 of *Mansfield Park*: ' and to the credit of the lady it may be added that without his being a man of the world or an elder brother, without any of the arts of flattery or small talk, he began to be agreeable to her . . . he was not pleasant by any common rule, he talked no nonsense, he paid no compliments, his opinions were unbending, his attentions tranquil and simple. There was a charm, perhaps, in his sincerity, his steadiness, his integrity, which Miss Crawford might be equal to feel.' The hero, we observe, remains the same, but the lady's attitude to his qualities has been changed from contempt to unwilling respect. This is one of the many changes in the rewriting of *Lady Susan* away from melodrama to real insight.

[11]We may note that the qualities Henry Crawford shares with Henry Tilney are those Henry Austen possessed, to judge by references in the *Letters*, where there are also significant allusions to the name Henry, which seems to denote for Jane and Cassandra a lively, talented man with brilliant conversational powers.

[12]These terms are repeatedly used in describing Henry Crawford. *c.f.* ' It was a love which, operating on an active sanguine spirit, of more warmth than delicacy, made her affection appear of greater consequence because it was withheld ' (Vol. III, ch. 2).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him the original in any respect of Reginald-Edmund. Edmund, it is relevant to remark, has given universal dissatisfaction; he belongs to the least interesting of Jane Austen's classes of character, to which I have referred before. He is not, like Mr. Knightley or William Price, probably studied from life and certainly offered as a lifelike person, nor is he, like Mr. Collins or Mr. Woodhouse, a vehicle constructed for conveying satiric humour or allied effects, but like Darcy he is derived from literature. A novel now unhappily almost unreadable but which from its publication in 1796 made an abiding impression on our author and is constantly alluded to directly or indirectly in her correspondence and fictions—I refer of course to Fanny Burney's *Camilla*—had appeared shortly before *Lady Susan*, according to my theory, was being precipitated from that family drama witnessed by our author to whom it was equally pregnant and painful. If Eliza had to be altered almost out of recognition before it could be safe to use her, it was at least as necessary to make her opposite number plainly *not* Henry. Edgar Mandlebert is the excessively fastidious hero, all delicacy and honour, who makes Fanny Burney's novels so tiresome, but in *Camilla* his speciality takes the form of doubts and hesitations as to whether the heroine is the superior being who alone will satisfy him; so high-minded is he that he drags the book out to five volumes. He is described in these terms to the unfortunate Camilla: 'Mandlebert is a creature whose whole composition is a pile of accumulated punctilios. He will spend his life refining away his own happiness.' The psychology of Edgar undoubtedly impressed Jane Austen, and there he was to hand when a similar kind of hero was needed for the disguised story of cousin Eliza's amours, but he remains quite unrealized and like Fanny is composed of conventional attributes. Edgar was spiritually curatic enough to serve even for the ordained Edmund in the revised version. Frederica's unaccountable Principles are also seen by the reader of *Camilla* to have their unmistakable origin in the argument of that novel, a moral lesson which in the more congenial atmosphere of the serious-minded *Mansfield Park* spread over large portions of the book. Thus the principled Fanny is made in the Burney manner to contrast with her female cousins whose education has lacked Principle (brought home to the responsible parent Sir Thomas at the end), and the neglect to instil Principles in females when young inevit-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ably leads to elopements, guilt and misery, as all readers of later eighteenth century fiction well know.* In *Mansfield Park* the idea of ' principles ' fills the place that ' candour ' had taken in the construction of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* (though in the latter Principle had played a minor part also, with Lydia Bennet illustrating the same moral as Maria and Julia Bertram). The theory of ' principle,' ineffectively dragged into *Lady Susan,* is developed from those notes with considerable subtlety. For instance, Sir Thomas and Mary Crawford are both worldly, but whereas Mary lacks principles Sir Thomas abounds in them, so he is shown to be a good (if erring) man in spite of his worldliness, whereas she is reprehensible in spite of her attractive qualities. Now in *Lady Susan* Sir Reginald De Courcy, as seen in his solitary letter to his son, was preposterously *un*worldly as well as good (' To the Fortune of your wife, the goodness of my own, will make me indifferent ' etc.). The clear-cut good-or-bad distinction on which the characters of the immature early story are divided, is such a crude reduction of life that even there the author cannot take it seriously (hence the fun poked at the Vernons, all the brains allotted to the bad side and diffused scorn directed at the good people). Sir Thomas differs from Sir Reginald not only in being more plausible but in being a really subtle sustained study of a type, the upright worldly man, whereas his original belongs to the too-good-to-be-true world of the conventional moral novel of the age. Just as instead of the unblenching villainess Lady Susan, exhibiting cold-blooded malignity, we have Mary Crawford's complex character always trembling in the balance. The theory of Principle is even more present, but it gives us this time, instead of a précis of a melodrama, an involved psychological study we must take with respect.

But we can observe some confusion here. Mansfield, according to one theme, as I have shown, was to stand for right feeling, as opposed to London; this is quite clear in *Lady Susan,* and remains so for the Crawfords (Henry learns a moral lesson at

* That the theory was a current belief is proved by the ' Opinions on *Mansfield Park* ' collected by our author, where her niece Fanny Knight is reported to object that she ' could not think it natural that Edmund should be so much attached to a woman without Principle like Mary C.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mansfield from contemplating William and Fanny, as Mary does from associating with Sir Thomas, Edmund and Fanny, and her own sister, Mrs. Grant). But Maria and Julia confuse the contrasted values. They ought to belong to the London set who are heartless, unprincipled and end badly, instead of being Mansfield products. The fact is, they compose another strand of the novel, and one derived from quite another source. They come from an early piece of Jane's fiction, absorbed into ***Mansfield Park*** in the way we have seen her amalgamating extraneous matter in her other novels. In ' Lesley Castle,' in *Volume the Second,* the principal characters are a vain, worldly, ' dissipated ' Susan who marries Sir George Lesley, and her almost equally unpleasant step-daughters, Margaret and Matilda, who however are country-bred girls just enjoying their first taste of London society. No doubt our Lady Susan was derived in name from the earlier one, connected as they were by the worldliness and ill-feeling common to them both, and both being, by description, extravagant and dissipated. By means of this link already existing, when the author was looking for more characters to fill out the new story ***Mansfield Park*** in 1808, the conceited Lesley step-daughters, with their mutual jealousy, would easily suggest themselves for the two sisters needed to work in with the Lady Susan, *i.e.,* Crawford, part of the plot, bringing with them their rivalry in love and their delight in escaping from the country into Society. The Lesley sisters were tall, fine young women, in contrast to their ' lively,' ' pretty little Mother-in-law,' the contrast being a source of spite on both sides, and here we have the origin of one of the characteristic bits of caustic insight into human nature of our author, even though it is gratuitous in ***Mansfield Park***. It was too good a shaft to waste:

> ' Miss Crawford's beauty did her no disservice with the Miss Bertrams. They were too handsome themselves to dislike any woman for being so too, and were almost as much charmed as their brothers, with her lively dark eyes, clear brown complexion, and general prettiness. Had she been tall, full formed, and fair, it might have been more of a trial; but as it was, there could be no comparison, and she was most allowably a sweet pretty girl, while they were the finest young women in the country.'

There has been a slight improvement (to judge by the first two

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sentences) in the author's opinion of feminine nature since ' Lesley Castle ' was written.

To expand the simple and consistent *Lady Susan* into a complex novel entailed the sacrifice of consistency in several other important respects. We have seen that the original function of Mansfield was in the end supported only by Fanny, Edmund and Sir Thomas, all of whom were represented in the original draft, *Lady Susan*. But even Sir Thomas has been refined into a study on his own, and his realistic character is partly at variance with his theoretical function. As we have also seen, the Bertram sisters, like Mrs. Norris, come from different sources. While Mrs. Norris, who is offered only in her original form, remains outside the drama, the Misses Bertram are welded into it yet don't fit in with the original moral argument. They illustrate another of a conflicting and quite conventional kind. That it is conventional and not, like the story of Mary Crawford, deeply realized by the author, is shown by the relief with which she abandons it when she has done her duty by it; hence the much-debated opening of the conclusion—' Let other pens *dwell* on guilt and misery ' etc. There is still another inhabitant of *Mansfield Park* who has even less to do with ' heart,' and we may well ask how she got there: Lady Bertram.

I am afraid she comes under the head only of self-indulgence on Miss Austen's part, though she has probably given more pleasure to the reader than any other of the Austen ' characters ' except Mr. Woodhouse. *Susan*, the earlier form of a novel which became *Catherine* when revised for publication in 1816-17 (we know it as *Northanger Abbey*) had been refused publication and the author seems by the time of the 1811-13 revision of *Mansfield Park* to have given up hope of ever bringing out so dated a tale as an anti-Gothick burlesque. Mrs. Allen, the anti-chaperone, who had been conceived in the burlesque spirit for Catherine's anti-romantic début was ' much too good to be lost,' as her creator writes of another episode, and she could be used in relation to Fanny much as Mrs. Allen had been used with Catherine. Hence the recurrence of pieces of the same kind as those in *Northanger Abbey* which illustrate Mrs. Allen's concentration on her own dress and well-being, her moral and mental apathy, her omission to guard her ward's manners and conduct and to give moral advice. Everybody recollects the episode of sending Chapman too late to dress Fanny

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the ball, but the reason for the following has perhaps been less evident:

> ' " No, my dear, I should not think of missing you, when such an offer as this comes in your way. I could do very well without you, if you were married to a man of such good estate as Mr. Crawford. And you must be aware, Fanny, that it is every young woman's duty to accept such a very unexceptionable offer as this."
>
> This was almost the only rule of conduct, the only piece of advice, which Fanny had ever received from her aunt in the course of eight years and a half.'

This use of a character conceived in burlesque terms suggested I believe relating her with a typical Austen joke. In 1791 Mrs. Inchbald's[13] immensely popular novel, *A Simple Story* appeared; there had been four editions by 1799, and a family of shameless novel-readers[14] like the Steventon household would hardly have failed to get hold of it. It is moreover, in the first half at any rate, one of the outstanding pieces of fiction of the later eighteenth century, remarkably well written and unusually subtle in its analysis of feelings, and built round a lively and witty heroine who might have suggested some hints for Elizabeth Bennett (and like *Pride and Prejudice* it is wholly dramatic in form —Mrs. Inchbald had been an actress). Unfortunately Mrs. Inchbald felt obliged to support morality by tacking on two final volumes which show the heroine justly punished for her lack of ' A PROPER EDUCATION ' (the moral tag with which the story closes). Volume three opens with her flight from her home and child, briefly accounted for in these preposterous terms—that her husband, Lord Elmwood, after a few years of perfect matrimonial happiness, had to leave her ' in order to rescue from the depredation of his own steward, his very large estates in the West Indies. His voyage was tedious; his residence there, from various accidents, prolonged from time to time ' In consequence, Lady Elmwood became dissipated:

---

[13]Mrs. Inchbald too was already connected with *Mansfield Park* as the translator of *Lovers' Vows*.

[14]*Letters*, Dec. 18, 1798.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'at first only unhappy . . . she flew from the present tedious solitude to the dangerous society of one who,' etc. The absurdity of this device to secure a moral was exactly in the Austen taste—there is much humour about similar absurdities in fiction in the *Letters* and the MS. volumes. It may have been at first an independent joke, but for the reconstruction of *Mansfield Park* it was obviously useful to send Sir Thomas like Lord Elmwood on a prolonged voyage to the West Indies in order to have him out of the way of the young people, and the joke of the already apathetic Lady Bertram's extreme insensibility to his absence could be worked in as well. Thus it is referred to repeatedly, but well rubbed in on the occasion when Edmund remonstrates with Tom about the theatrical project:

> '"... And as to my father's being absent, it is so far from an objection, that I consider it rather as a motive; for the expectation of his return must be a very anxious period to my mother, and if we can be the means of amusing that anxiety, and keeping up her spirits for the next few weeks, I shall think our time very well spent, and so I am sure will he.—It is a *very* anxious period for her."
>
> As he said this, each looked towards their mother. Lady Bertram sunk back in one corner of the sofa, the picture of health, wealth, ease and tranquillity, was just falling into a gentle doze, while Fanny was getting through the few difficulties of her work for her.
>
> Edmund smiled and shook his head.
>
> "By Jove! this won't do"—cried Tom, throwing himself into a chair with a hearty laugh. "To be sure, my dear mother, your anxiety—I was unlucky there." '

Lady Bertram in fact serves as a hold-all for burlesque purposes. Her epistolary style is another self-indulgence of the author, inserted first perhaps in the version of *Mansfield Park* in letters of 1808-1809. The whole passage (in Ch. 13 of Vol. III) strikes a different note from all that precedes it and all that follows; it is in the same unfeeling tone as the spiteful descriptions of Mrs. Allen and of Lady Middleton and of much in the early writings (for instance, it implies that the dangerous illness of her eldest son was

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a source of pleasure to his mother because it ' was of a nature to promise occupation for the pen for many days to come '). It is only an opportunity to work in a satiric account of conventional letter-writing, and belongs with the early satiric letters, whence no doubt it was taken.

> ' . . . Lady Bertram rather shone in the epistolary line, having early in her marriage, from the want of other employment, and the circumstance of Sir Thomas's being in Parliament, got into the way of making and keeping correspondents, and formed for herself a very creditable, commonplace, amplifying style, so that a very little matter was enough for her . . .'

serves as a pretext for inserting a number of pieces in the style described. But the thinness of the device is exposed by the inconsistency it imposes on the character: no one can imagine the Lady Bertram described in every other part of the book taking the trouble to write such letters, when she requires a niece to manage her ' work ' and write her notes for her and a son or husband to direct and seal her letters. It is not greater than the impossibility of a Sir Thomas ever marrying such a woman, but that glaring improbability is due to the author's self-indulgence in replacing the worthy and sensible Lady De Courcy by a burlesque character. Other expansions from the original *Lady Susan* can be accounted for in other ways with equal satisfaction to the critic I think. Thus a stiffening of incident from real life was used, as in *Emma*: William Price has long been admitted by the Austen family to have been drawn from one of the sailor brothers in his youth, while Fanny's amber cross derives from the topaz cross and gold chain Charles bought for each of his sisters in 1801 with his prize-money—deprived of the chain for dramatic purposes naturally, but why converted from topaz to amber unless in accordance with a habit of altering on principle whatever she took from life for use in her work? A similar use of relevant copy which had some place in the author's emotional history is the linking up of Maria's elopement with that of an actual acquaintance. Maria's misconduct had originally, as we have seen, been introduced to illustrate a conventional moral theory, and would have been as insubstantial or remote from the author as Lydia's or Mrs. Brandon's or Eliza Williams's fall

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

evidently was—there is no personal feeling betrayed in their case. But in June, 1808, an acquaintance, Mrs. Powlett, eloped with a peer, and Jane wrote to Cassandra:

> 'This is a sad story about Mrs. Powlett. I should not have suspected her of such a thing.—She staid the Sacrament I remember the last time that you and I did.—A hint of it, with Initials, was in yesterday's *Courier*.'

The mixture of shock and disgust at a near acquaintance outraging one's moral code is a not unusual phenomenon in those who can accept violation in theory with equanimity or even amusement. The unpleasant feeling attached to Jane Austen's handling of the episode of Mrs. Rushworth's infidelity, which has been so often adversely commented on, has its origin, I think, in her reaction to Mrs. Powlett's history (occurring in 1808 it must have been a very recent shock), just as the account of the elopement read out by Mr. Price to Fanny is based on the 'hint of it, with Initials, in yesterday's *Courier*.'

Sotherton, I believe, was suggested by the visit Jane and her mother paid to the old mansion of Stoneleigh in 1806 when it descended to Mrs. Austen's relatives. We notice that in the case of other great houses Jane thinks it sufficient to describe the mansion as handsome, modern, and well placed, having no particular seat in mind for Pemberley or Rosings or Mansfield Park or whatever it is, and these being the qualities she admired in a house, with her thoroughly pre-Romantic taste. But there is a whole background to Sotherton. Now there is a letter extant from Mrs. Austen while at Stoneleigh during this visit which describes just such a mansion and way of life as that described for Sotherton. We have no knowledge of any such basis for the Portsmouth household, but we may safely conclude that like the Watson household and the Bates's home it is an exaggeration of the element in the author's surroundings that, as we see in her letters, irritated and depressed her at times, a nervous outlet for a life of trivial preoccupations due to narrow means, contrasted, as Portsmouth was contrasted by Fanny with Mansfield, with the ideal life of elegant propriety based on ample means, which through the *Letters* we see her pathetically savouring at Godsmersham and other such places.

The use of *Lovers' Vows* in the first volume is equally charac-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teristic of her method of working. She uses it as a reference that the reader could be expected to follow, just as she elsewhere uses *Evelina, Cecilia, The Romance of the Forest* and *Udolpho,* and probably other contemporary writings. As Mr. Reitzel says[15]: ' Jane Austen was intent, as she composed this section of her novel, on a fulness of meaning that is no longer entirely understood.' *Lovers' Vows* in fact, as Mr. Reitzel demonstrates, was very well-known at the beginning of the century, even performed a number of time at Bath while the Austens lived there, and had aroused hostile criticism by its ' advanced ' Romantic morality. The subject was sufficiently in the air to suit her purpose, which was for personal reasons a narrowly moralistic one. The play moreover gave her an opportunity to justify her personal disapproval of amateur theatricals—it would occasion undesirable situations among the performers, such as acting love-making, which in her own family had led to Henry's engagement, and enough dubious matter both to expose Mary Crawford as lacking delicacy in being willing to act the part of Amelia and to justify that censure by Sir Thomas and Edmund of private play-acting which it is one of the author's purposes to proclaim. It is certainly as a hit at the new morality that we are to take Sir Thomas's ' That I should be cautious and quick-sighted, and feel many scruples which my children do *not* feel, is perfectly natural.' The theatricals got into *Mansfield Park* owing to the performances at Steventon, as Mr. Hubback describes them. It is interesting that they are not even sketched in *Lady Susan* though apparently an important part of the total situation which inspired that story. Raking up the whole episode in 1808, when *Lady Susan* was first expanded, offered the now mature artist the opportunity to use material such as this which had before been beyond her scope. *Lovers' Vows* was handy and something more: like other literary pieces she had used in her previous novels, it provided a hint for pattern as well as a source of reference, though the reader can understand the novel quite well enough without a knowledge of *Lovers' Vows,* just as *Pride and Prejudice* can be enjoyed without a knowledge of *Cecilia,* though not perhaps fully understood in either case.

---

[15] *Review of English Studies,* October, 1933, ' *Mansfield Park* and *Lovers' Vows.*'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All these varieties of fresh material have not successfully been fused with the old story, as we have seen, but *Mansfield Park* represents a much more ambitious undertaking than anything before, and shows new technical devices, a new kind of seriousness, and an attempt at a more sensitive, if less immediately successful, style of writing. We may explain this sudden access of ambition and confidence as an artist. By 1808 she had drafted five novels, and in the following year she was able to rewrite *Sense and Sensibility* for publication, which met with more success than she had expected. From then till the end her life was taken up with the overlapping production of novels for the press. A sense of power as a writer must have possessed her at this period, and a sense also that her real life lay in the past—like her sister, she had lost her lover by death, she had deliberately rejected a conspicuously eligible offer in the following year, and had now long passed the age of twenty-seven, an age that in her novels is taken as marking a period, as she would say.

She had lost her father and her early home and some of her closest friends. It is not surprising that the revision of *Lady Susan* at this date should produce a revival of painful memories and poignant feelings. But she again put the story aside, and returned for the third time to *Sense and Sensibility*, then to rewriting *Pride and Prejudice*, after which she devoted more time to turning the epistolary *Mansfield Park* into the narrative we know.

(To be Concluded.)

Q. D. Leavis.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ITALIAN POETRY

(I)

ITALIAN poets and critics have always been peculiarly interested in linguistic questions. The reasons for this are various and derive, generally speaking, from the peculiar conditions of Italian culture. The fact that the Italian language had behind it five hundred years of continuous achievement before any independent political organism corresponded, however inadequately, to it accounts for a great deal; so does the presence in the peninsula of tenacious regional attachments and local differences fostered by foreign domination. The situation of the Italian language, in fact, is a most peculiar one. The case of Manzoni, the Milanese novelist who re-wrote his *Promessi Sposi* to give it a proper Tuscan purity and deliberately set himself to study the Florentine idiom for the purpose, would be hard to parallel in any other literature. The definition of pure Italian usage was a matter for scholarly discussion long before it became, as it is only now becoming, the simple recognition of an existing fact. Many writers in the nineteenth century, influenced by the growth of nationalist sentiment, insisted indeed that the Italian linguistic problem called for a political and social solution. Only from a united Italy, they argued, could there rise a truly national idiom, only through complete liberation and the formation of what Massimo D'Azeglio called " the new Italian " could the question of the language be genuinely, naturally solved. Meanwhile the influence of literary tradition—and especially of the spirit of humanism in letters—inevitably remained profound. The Italian writer, generally highly intelligent and sophisticated in his outlook, found himself normally confined even excessively, to the improvement of his literary medium. Ariosto's praise of Cardinal Bembo,

> che'l *puro* e *dolce* idioma nostro,
> Levato fuor del volgare uso tetro,
> Quale esser dee, ci ha col suo esempio mostro
> (*Orlando Furioso*. Canto XLVI),

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

might be taken as representative of the spirit in which much great Italian poetry was written.

It is a spirit, of course, which has also a positive side. Growth in linguistic precision implies almost invariably an advance in the possibilities of thought and the quality of emotion. The Italian poet who devoted himself so passionately to the purification of his medium was doing much more than simply accepting certain limitations in the practical and political sphere. As the inheritor of a great humanist tradition, he was perfecting in accordance with it an instrument of extraordinary limpidity and grace. The purity and harmony of which Ariosto speaks reflects, through linguistic precision, a true refinement of spirit. The literary language of Italian tradition is dominated by specifically cultured and civilised interests. Its continual stress is upon the order, clarity, and intellectual coherence of experience, and this implies a very high degree of literary consciousness. From the earliest times, when Dante and the *stilnovisti* adapted French and Provençal forms to their own purposes, the poet is the ' artificer ' who moulds words to his intention much as the sculptor shapes his stone or the potter moulds his clay to the desired shape. When Dante wishes to praise Guinizelli and to indicate the greatness of his own debt he can confer upon the dead poet no more honourable title than that of ' miglior fabbro,' outstanding *craftsman* in verse (*Purgatorio* XXVI). The compliment comes fittingly from one who himself wrote, in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia,* a treatise on the vernacular speech as original in its conception as it was passionate in its devotion to linguistic questions. This emphasis on craftsmanship which Dante first defined and which was still alive six hundred years later in D'Annunzio's best work, is of the very essence of Italian literary classicism.

The history of modern Italian poetry can be usefully interpreted in terms of the profound modification under modern conditions, of this classical conception of poetry. Giacomo Leopardi, who was the greatest Italian poet of the nineteenth century, might also be called the last representative in Italy of the great classical tradition. The definition needs to be accepted with reservations. Leopardi was, more exactly speaking, a classicist caught in a romantic situation and affected by romantic ways of thinking. His personal unhappiness, the result largely of physical

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deformity and illness, expressed itself in a tragic sense of isolation and in a reasoned conviction of man's inevitable misery. His thought turns continually upon a contrast between the critical and analytical consciousness, which he regards as valid but necessarily destructive, and the state of simplicity and 'illusion' in which alone happiness is conceivable and the intense experience of poetry possible. The influence of Rousseau upon such an outlook is obvious and we find Leopardi quoting in his notebooks the observation that 'Tout homme qui pense est un etre corrompu' (*Zibaldone,* 59); but his reactions to this proposition are not, in many respects, typically romantic. Leopardi believed that the life of illusion—that is, of *sentiment*—was essential to poetry, was, indeed, the only thing that made human existence tolerable; but he never confused sentiment with objective truth, or claimed for it a validity above that of reason. Truth for him, as for the youthful Manzoni, was the truth of the French materialists and Encyclopædists of the eighteenth century, a thing based on analysis and reason and leading—this is the tragedy upon which all Leopardi's poetry turns—to disillusionment. His poetic sensibility revolted from the conclusions of 'reason' and, by so doing, produced great poetry; but he never suggested that the poetic faculty, the Imagination of so much romantic criticism, constituted a conveniently independent gateway to 'truth.' This sense of proper distinctions is enough to separate him, as it separates most of the best Italian writing of the last century, from the general course of contemporary poetic theory.

The essential classicism of Leopardi, however, is most apparent in his sense of literary craftsmanship. He read the Latin poets and the great Italian authors of the *Trecento* and *Cinquecento* incessantly, and commented copiously in his notebooks upon their peculiarities. The spirit in which these studies were undertaken is best illustrated by one of his own comments: 'The *Cinquecento* formed and determined the Italian language in such a way that, gaining in culture and order, it lost nothing in naturalness, copiousness, variety, force, or even in liberty.' (*Zibaldone,* 108). The observation, apart from its obvious affinity to the passage I have already quoted from Ariosto, defines perfectly the quality of Leopardi's own work. Freedom and naturalness he regarded as essential to poetic speech. They were the antithesis of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affectation and *tournure* which he held to have been produced by excessive civilisation in the French, and which he associated with the destructive rationalism of the past century. But—and this is of vital importance if we wish to understand why romantic theory produced in Italy so little work of the first order—they were also far from the 'simple intuition of reality' (*Zibaldone,* 86) which he regarded as the great weakness of romantic verse. Poetry, for Leopardi, must spring from the heart, must reflect the 'illusions' which rationalism so implacably destroyed, but the linguistic medium through which its sincerity came to expression must be perfected, made truly limpid and civilised through an awareness of literary tradition. The enemy of poetry was not 'civilisation,' which was mirrored in the 'culture and order' of the *Cinquecento* and was its finest flower, but 'reason' to which 'civilisation,' as Leopardi conceived it, was explicitly opposed: 'There is no doubt that the progress of reason and the extinguishing of illusions produce barbarism, and that a people excessively illuminated becomes not very civilised, as the philosophers of our day propose, but rather barbarous.' (*Zibaldone,* 22). True simplicity, to put the matter in another way, far from being the gift of the unsophisticated soul, is the achievement of a civilisation which the individual can only acquire by discipline and a continual study of worthy models. It is the product of a culture before it becomes the possession of a person; that is why the *canzoni* of Petrarch and the writings of the *Cinquecentisti* served as a constant literary model for the author of the *Canti.*

That there was nothing merely derivative or scholastic about this apprenticeship may be seen from the *Canti* themselves. We may take, as example, a few lines from one of the most familiar of them all:

Siede con le vicine
Su la scala a filar la vecchierella,
Incontro là dove si perde il giorno;
E novellando vien del suo buon tempo,
Quando ai dì della festa ella si ornava,
Ed ancor sana e snella
Solea danzar la sera intra di quei
Ch'ebbi compagni dell'età piú bella.
Già tutta l'aria imbruna,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Torna azzurro il sereno, e tornan l'ombre
Giú de'colli e da tetti,
Al biancheggiar della recente luna.
(Il Sabato del Villaggio).

The verse of this passage is, in one sense, more free, more fluid, than anything that preceded it in Italian literature. The strict division into stanzas that characterizes the structure of the Italian canzone from Dante onwards has disappeared, and the description of the old peasant women is developed with an ease and fluency that might almost seem prosaic. The language, too, is the simplest and most direct conceivable. It has that concentrated purity which enables the best Italian poetry to achieve, by means that appear extraordinarily simple, the intensity which other languages often gain by the richness of their vacabulary and the complexity of their imagery. It seems, in fact, that every word has been deliberately pointed, purged of all subsidiary meanings, directed entirely upon the object by the trained literary consciousness fully in control. Such poetry stands, in reality, at the opposite extreme from ' romantic ' ingenuousness. There is no ' simple diction ' here, no belief that the avoidance of ' poetic ' words will in itself infallibly produce poetry. Above all—and here perhaps more than anywhere we see the inheritance of classicism—the basis of Leopardi's verse is not, as in so much more recent writing, the single word or line reflecting the intense, detached experience but the complete period within which the various impressions have to play their vivid, but necessarily subordinate part. The function of rhyme in this apparently very free verse is to enforce the underlying unity of the sentence, and thus to convey Leopardi's grasp of the complete experience in all its organic relationships. ' Imbruna,' for example, contains beneath its apparent simplicity, a sufficiently intense apprehension of the thickening light of evening; but the movement of the verse bears the reader on, imperceptibly but inevitably, through the carry-over in the next two lines—

tornan l'ombre
Giù'da colli e da' tetti—

to the rhyming word ' luna ' that completes it. More striking still is the way in which Leopardi uses his rhymes in ' —ella '—it is these, more than any others, which bind the verse together in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

essential continuity—so as to coincide with the most intensely felt elements of the passage. The old peasant-woman, ' la vecchierella,' sits at her work ' incontro là dove si perde il giorno,' and the *loss* of daylight, impalpable yet fatal, lends to her memory of the days of her own youth a personal sense of the irretrievable passage of time. She remembers her presence at the village *festa*, still agile and vigorous—' ancor sana e snella ': the rhyme with ' vecchierella ' emphasizes the contrast—surrounded by those who had been her companions in ' l'età piú bella,' the flower of her life. To make the rhymes fall so easily, so inevitably (the construction of the whole passage, like the simplicity of its language, is barely different from prose) implies literary skill of the first order. It is a perfect example of what Leopardi meant by language that ' gained in culture and order ' without losing in ' naturalness ' and ' force.' He derived his sense of poetic structure and linguistic purity in great part from his study of Petrarch and the writers of the Cinquecento. It was the unique quality of his classicism that enabled him to combine it so successfully with the freedom and simplicity required by his own sensibility.

From Leopardi it is natural to pass on to Giosué Carducci. In the fifty years that separate the maturity of the two poets Italian life was dominated by patriotic interests which practically monopolized its intellectual and spiritual energies and profoundly affected its literary traditions. Italian unity appeared for the first time, not simply in a common speech and in a certain measure of common aspirations, but as a concrete political reality. No Italian poet who matured in the years round 1870 could ignore that fact; unfortunately, it also proved true that, in recognizing it, he was bound to sacrifice some of the purity and integrity which earlier poets had been able to cultivate. Italian poetry, like Italian political life, suffered uncommonly in the transition from aspiration to achievement; indeed, the two spheres are perhaps more closely connected than may immediately appear. The Italian tradition in poetry had been essentially humanistic and generally remote from politics. The pressure of events, which forced it to define its attitude towards nationalism, inevitably brought out its limitations. It also obscured its virtues. The spirit which animated the new nationalism was, when compared with that of the humanist tradition, perhaps more generous, but certainly less precise, less sure of its values, and—by a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strange paradox—in some ways less Italian. The paradox is illuminated by the presence of certain defects in the social and political life of the new state. Italian unity, as it was finally achieved in 1870, was the work of a minority inspired by foreign —chiefly French—ideals. The material for a genuine Liberal movement on a popular basis simply did not exist. The mass of the people, in whom political awareness had been discouraged by foreign domination and obstructed by the barriers of a rooted regionalism, never shared the ideals of the few, never gave them spontaneous acceptance; indeed it is doubtful whether even now, after seventy years of unity and the pressure of modern conditions, Italy is fully aware of herself as a nation. The result was that Italian Liberalism, never adequately rooted in the national consciousness, was driven to seek the appearance of substance by assimilation to foreign ideals which remained too often mere abstractions. Anyone who wishes to understand the deficiencies of Italian nationalism might well meditate upon the vast white monument which was raised in the centre of Rome to celebrate the achievement of 1870. There is nothing particularly Italian about that monument. It is, in its bad taste, thoroughly European, a bringing together of everything that was shoddy, rhetorical, and pretentious in the spirit of the age; but—and this is the significant fact—it stands, if not for the spirit in which the early generations of Liberals worked for a united Italy,[1] at least for that in which it was finally attained. The poetry of Carducci, in spite of all his unquestionable feeling for the Italian achievement in literature, shows that it was not a spirit with which the pure classicism of humanist tradition could ultimately come to terms.

Carducci insisted, in his voluminous critical writings, upon calling himself a classicist, but the precise content of his classicism is not easy to define. His conception of it seems often to derive rather from a scholastic theory than from a still living tradition.

[1]Mazzini's criticisms of the French Revolution and its ideals (see his Essay of 1871) are interesting evidence of the difficulty experienced by the earlier Italian Liberals in accepting these foreign ideals. They help to explain why acceptance, when it came, was largely of inferior elements and failed to achieve a genuinely Italian expression. They even throw light upon the genesis of Fascismo.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His verse, carefully considered, leaves us with much the same impression. This does not mean that Carducci was, as a poet, in any way, negligible, although the estimate of critics like Croce—based upon ideological rather than critical considerations—is certainly excessive. It *does* imply that the classicism of his *Odi Barbare* is a more precarious thing than that of Leopardi, something at once narrower and more uneasy in the presence of interests which are ultimately incompatible with it. The classicism of Leopardi had depended upon a high standard of linguistic purity and upon an unerring sense of the correspondence between word and emotion. These things were completely independent of the accidental properties—Roman memories, conscious Latin echoes, and so on—of ' classical ' verse, and might indeed adapt themselves to any subject of human significance. That of Carducci, on the other hand, rests much more upon relatively accidental associations of subject, academically conceived and only sometimes raising in the poet a true emotional response. The nature of the change is apparent even in one of his most successful works, the ode on *Le Fonti del Clitunno:*

scendon nel vespero umido, o Clitunno,
a te le greggi: a te l'umbro fanciullo
la riluttante pecora ne l'onda
immerge, mentre

ver'lui dal seno de la madre adusta,
che scalza siede al casolare e canta,
una poppante volgesi e dal viso
tondo sorride:

pensoso il padre, di caprini pelli
l'anche ravvolto come i fauni antichi,
regge il dipinto plaustro e la forza
de' bei giovenchi,

de' bei giovenchi dal quadrato petto,
erti sul capo le lunate corna,
dolci ne gli occhi, nivei, che il mite
Virgilio amava.[3]

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It would be wrong, in insisting upon the scholastic inspiration of practically every line in this, to under-estimate its vitality. By comparison with Leopardi the language of the passage is forced, twisted to fit into the relatively rigid metrical scheme and to retain syntactical forms of Latin inspiration. The direct reminiscences, too, are easily traced. The father, like ' an ancient faun ' with the ' caprine pelli '—the adjective is purely literary in feeling—round his legs, the ' madre adusta,' and above all the ' snow-white oxen ' which ' the gentle Virgil loved ' : all these were obviously a part of Carducci's Latin reading before they came to life in his own poem. For live they undoubtedly do. They live simply because Virgil and Horace still represented a possible interpretation of rural life in Italy, still had a genuine connection—at least in Umbria—with the contemporary scene. Carducci was poet enough, at least in this poem, to see the connection and to express it in verse. When in other poems he attempts to assimilate Latin phrase and imagery to political rhetoric or romantic subjects, the results are sometimes less happy: here at least the *stile pompier* which was his besetting danger is held effectively in check by the concrete local inspiration. There is real vigour in the picture of the child at his mother's breast, and grave beauty in the reference (scholarly though it is in every detail) to the strength of the ' bei giovenchi ' in the beautiful last stanza. The classical inspiration of Carducci's best verses is thinner than in Leopardi, more conscious of the gap, which devoted study has to bridge, between past poetry and present experience; but it is still present, though elements of a very different kind are always threatening to submerge it.

---

[2] ' To you, O Clitumnus, the herds descend in the evening warmth: in your waters the Umbrian child immerses the unwilling sheep whilst, turning towards him from the breast of the sunburnt mother who sits barefoot at her threshold and sings, a baby turns and smiles from his full face. Thoughtfully the father, his thighs covered like those of the ancient Fauns with goat-skins, guides the painted cart and the power of the fine square-chested oxen: the oxen with the crescent horns rising above their heads, snow-white and gentle in the eyes, as the mild Virgil loved them.' I translate simply for the sense, and have made no attempt to catch the spirit of a difficult passage.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These elements, in poetry as in politics, are not primarily Italian. The presence of foreign influences, imperfectly fused with the Italian tradition, is most noticeable in Carducci. He was a devoted student of the great Italian poets; but the formative influences of his youth, the men who shaped, if not his literary consciousness, at least the spiritual outlook and political enthusiasms which were bound in the long run to affect it, were Victor Hugo and Heine. The result was, inevitably, a notable diffusion of the original purity of the classical idea. It affects most immediately his handling of verse. Carducci's distinctive innovation in Italian metre was the *verso barbaro* to which he devoted his best volume, the *Odi Barbare* of 1893. The new line was an attempt to fuse the metrical forms of Latin poetry, based upon length of syllable, with the accentuated stresses of the vernacular. Preoccupations of this kind are in themselves symptomatic of a change of outlook. Leopardi's classicism found no difficulty in expressing itself through the forms, free yet disciplined, that were congenial to it. Classicism with him was a matter of balanced phrase and linguistic purity which operated at a level far below the counting of feet and the distribution of accents. Carducci's *verso barbaro,* on the other hand, is at bottom an academic experiment which succeeded only where the conscious literary inspiration is sufficiently robust, sufficiently close to his own experience, to take charge of the poem. Elsewhere, when metrical theory prevails over full poetic realization, the metre moves jerkily and even mechanically in a manner that recalls Swinburne rather than the Latin poets and reminds us that Carducci had been, in his youth, the author of a naïve, ebullient *Ode to Satan* in the full romantic manner. The poetic feeling of the nineteenth century, nationalistic, romantic, and rhetorical, asserts itself in a fresh rhythm which calls—in spite of the poet's classicist reservations—for contemporary modes of expression.

Carducci's handling of these moods is not always successful. Generally speaking—and the fact helps us to understand the peculiar weaknesses of Italian nationalist sentiment—he is at his best where his inspiration is most firmly localized. Most of his numerous pieces of conscious patriotic inspiration have the qualities and defects of good occasional poetry; the rhetoric which begins by making a definite and forceful impression upon the reader commonly ends by

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leaving him almost indifferent. The poem on Garibaldi written in 1880 is typical:

> Oggi L'Italia t'adora. Invocati
> la nuova Roma novello Romolo:
> tu ascendi, o divino: di morte
> lunge i silenzii dal tuo capo.
>
> Sopra il comune gorgo de l'anime
> te rifulgente chiamano i secoli
> a le altezze, al puro concilio
> de i numi indigeti su la patria.
>
> Tu ascendi. E Dante dice a Virgilio:
> —Mai non pensammo forma piú nobile
> d'eroe.—Dice Livio, e sorride:
> —E de la storia, o poeti.

The underlying purpose here is rather rhetorical, incitatory than genuinely poetic. The two can be, and sometimes are, successfully combined; but the balance is difficult to maintain and more often the poetry is overcome, bludgeoned out of existence, so to speak, by sheer over-emphasis. This happens frequently in Carducci. The effort to relate modern Italian history to the story of Rome is natural in a country that only achieved unity after more than a thousand years of divided existence; indeed, there was, at the time when Carducci wrote this poem, nothing nearer to in the shape of a formative tradition to look back to. But this very remoteness is, from the poetic point of view, a grave disadvantage. The poet has to make up by emphasis what is lacking in definition. The reference to the divinity of Romulus, the sweeping gesture of contempt for the 'comune gorgo de l'anime,' the judgments ascribed to Dante, Virgil, and Livy, all have a value that is essentially and consciously declamatory. Their effect is less to make the reader concentrate more intensely upon the meaning of the poem than to exact from him, through the appeal to accepted historical symbols, a general measure of assent to the note of patriotic admiration. Like so much of Carducci's rhetoric, it is powerful and sincere; but, as poetry, it remains inferior.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With the verses of local inspiration it is a very different matter. In his descriptions of the Maremman or Tuscan landscape Carducci often expresses himself with impressive vitality. Some of his best poetry recalls the robust vigour of Whitman, but a Whitman whose delight in everything alive is strengthened and deepened by contact with the Latin inheritance of Italy. One could quote, to illustrate this, a poem like *Sogno d'Estate,* written in 1880 and itself included in the *Odi Barbare,* where the landscape of the Maremman hills is fused with family memories to convey a vivid sense of rich fulfilment in the full Italian summer; but a prose description taken from an autobiographical essay on *Le Risorse di San Miniato* (published in 1883) is perhaps still more striking. It is an account of the *cicalas* in the fields of the Valdarno at the height of their activity:

> 'Cominciano agli ultimi di giugno, nelle splendide mattinate, quando la clemenza del sole nel suo primo salire sorride ancora agli odorosi vezzi della giovine estate, cominciano ad accordare in lirica monotonia le voci argute e squillanti. Prima una, due, tre, quattro da altrettanti alberi; poi dieci, venti, cento, mille, non si sa di dove, pazze di sole, come le sentì il poeta greco; poi tutto un gran coro che aumenta d'intonazione e d'intensità co'l luglio, e canta, canta, canta, su'capi, d'attorno a'piedi de'mietitori. Finisce la mietitura, ma non il coro. Nelle fiere solitudini del solleone, pare che tutta la pianura canti, e tutti i monti cantino, e tutti i boschi cantino: pare che essa la terra dalla perenne gioventú del suo seno espanda in un inno immenso il giubilo de'suoi sempre nuovi amori co'l sole.'[3]

[3] 'They begin towards the end of June, during the splendid mornings when the clemency of the sun in its first rising still smiles upon the odorous graces of the youthful summer, they begin to harmonize in lyric monotony their sharp and strident voices. First one, two, three, four, from an equal number of trees; then ten, twenty, a hundred, a thousand, no one knows from whence, mad with the sun, as the Greek poet heard them; then an entire great chorus which increases in intonation and intensity with the heat of July, and sings, sings, on the heads and around the feet of the harvesters. The

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The conclusion, like most of Carducci's writings, is rhetorical; but the rhetoric is here fully justified by the power of the sentiment and the immediacy of the description, itself rhetorically expressed, which leads up to it. The patriotic verse, in which the precise local impression is necessarily replaced by the vaguer and less realized concept of ' Italy,' rarely attains a similar excellence. In so far as Carducci's inspiration is not thus locally conditioned, it expresses itself most genuinely in channels which are rather European than distinctively Italian.

Such expression is present even in the mature and avowedly classical *Odi Barbare*. Much in the volume is not, in inspiration and treatment, distinctively Italian. In the opening lines of a poem like that entitled *Alla Stazione in una Mattina d'Autunno* the pure tradition of Italian classicism is clearly giving way to more cosmopolitan ways of feeling:

> Oh quei fanali come s'inseguono
> accidiosi là dietro gli alberi,
> tra i rami stillanti di pioggia
> sbadigliando la luce su'l fango.[4]

The difference between these verses and those already quoted from *Il Sabato del Villaggio* amounts to a difference between two worlds. Carducci is using the Italian language in a way that is fundamentally new. His insistence is no longer upon that development of the complete thought in the finished and rounded phrase which had been Leopardi's inheritance from the *Trecento* and the *Cinquecento*, but rather upon the strong and independent emotion which seeks expression in the single accentuated word. The logical development of the thought gives way, in such words as ' sbadigliando '

---

harvest finishes, but not the chorus. In the proud solitudes of the hot season, it seems as though the whole plain were singing, and all the mountains and woods singing with them; it seems as though the earth herself in her eternal youth were expressing in an immense hymn from the depth of her heart the jubilations of her eternal love for the sun.'

[4]How those lamps follow one another bitterly behind the trees, among the branches dripping rain, yawning their light on to the mud.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and ' accidiosi,' to an emphasis upon the surprising and isolated expression; the depression of the poet, undefined and indefinable, merges mysteriously through his choice of the unexpected word into his account of the world around him. The pessimism of Leopardi, which had been far more deep-seated, had been of a very different kind, at once more constant and more clearly defined. It had proceeded from a precise intellectual realization of the place occupied by the individual in an indifferent and material universe; the tedium of Carducci, which affects the nerves more deeply than the conscious mind, is already far nearer to the ' âme lasse ' of Baudelaire seeking in the *Faubourgs* of Paris a new intensity of experience. The very fact that such a poem could be so successfully written meant that the classical and humanist tradition in Italian letters was irretrievably dead. The consequences of its death, still partly concealed in Carducci by the survival of literary interests belonging to a previous age, are apparent in the poetry of the next generation.

D. A. TRAVERSI.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REVALUATIONS (XIV):

JOSEPH CONRAD (II)

'VICTORY' is a study of Heyst's case; he is indisputably at the centre of the book. While he is wholly sympathetic in his scepticism, as Decoud is not, that scepticism presents itself as specifically conditioned, and, in the upshot of the action, it is renounced. A certain ambiguity does all the same attend it: Heyst's irony is dramatically rendered, yet it merges into the author's own—an intimate relation becomes at times unmistakable:

> 'The young man learned to reflect, which is a destructive process, a reckoning of the cost. It is not the clear-sighted who rule the world. Great achievements are accomplished in a blessed, warm mental fog, which the pitiless cold blast of the father's analysis had blown away from the son.'

—That is the author's own voice, and the tone is characteristic. Of Schomberg's infatuation we are told, a page later, by a Conrad whose relation to Heyst's father is plain:

> 'Forty-five is the age of recklessness for many men, as if in defiance of the decay and death waiting with open arms in the sinister valley at the bottom of the inevitable hill. For every age is fed on illusions, lest men should renounce life early and the human race come to an end.'

Schomberg is in every way unadmirable: what we recognize in this tone is the Heyst-MacWhirr or Decoud-Mitchell antithesis—an antithesis that is implicit in the characteristic Conradian irony.

However, Conrad in *Victory* doesn't rest at that antithesis. Intelligence and fine consciousness in Heyst are represented as very specially conditioned; perverted, in fact, by the influence of a father who is a kind of genius of disillusion, and the 'victory' is a victory over scepticism, a victory of life. The tragic irony that makes it come too late and identifies it with death doesn't make it less a victory; it is unequivocal:

> '"Ah, Davidson, woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love—and to put its trust in life."'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The process, a progressive self-discovery through relations with others, by which Heyst arrives here is rendered with poignant insight and convincing subtlety. To avoid the indignities, follies and illusions of involvement in life he has prescribed for himself an aloof self-sufficiency:

> 'Heyst was not conscious of either friends or of enemies. It was the essence of his life to be a solitary achievement, accomplished not by hermit-like withdrawal with its silence and immobility, but by a system of restless wandering, by the detachment of an impermanent dweller amongst changing scenes. In this scheme he had perceived the means of passing through life without suffering and almost without a single care in the world —invulnerable because elusive!'

But the wisdom of this scheme turns out to be inadequate, and life convicts Heyst of lack of self-knowledge. With his intelligence and moral fastidiousness goes a sensitive quickness of sympathy:

> 'No decent feeling was ever scorned by Heyst.'

That is the author's way of putting it. But Heyst is precluded from realizing the significance of this part of his make-up by habit, the persisting influence of his father, which may be represented by this:

> '"You still believe in something, then," he said in a clear voice, which had been growing feebler of late. "You believe in flesh and blood, perhaps? A full and equable contempt would soon do away with that too. But since you have not attained to it, I advise you to cultivate that form of contempt which is called pity."'

Moved by an irresistible sympathetic impulse that is of the essence of the self-respect that qualifies him for 'contempt,' Heyst comes to the rescue of the cornered Morrison, and the history—it is at first a comedy—of his unwilling involvement begins. Morrison, himself a quixotically sensitive and generous man (an admirable piece of Conradian characterization, realized in a physical presence with Conrad's Dickensian vividness—

> 'He was tall and lantern-jawed and clean-shaven, and looked like a barrister who had thrown his wig to the dogs.')

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is overcome with the thought of his inability to repay Heyst:

> 'Poor Morrison actually laid his head on the cabin table, and remained in that crushed attitude while Heyst talked to him soothingly with the utmost courtesy. The Swede was as much distressed as Morrison, for he understood the other's feelings perfectly. No decent feeling was ever scorned by Heyst. But he was incapable of outward cordiality of manner, and he felt acutely his defeat. Consummate politeness is not the right tonic for an emotional collapse. They must have had, both of them, a fairly painful time of it in the cabin of the brig.'

The tragi-comedy of their relations is given us foreshortened, with admirable economy. When, early in the book, the second stage of Heyst's re-education opens we find him among the forlorn vestiges of the Tropical Coal Belt Company, the optimistic commercial enterprise that his combined generosity, indifference, and inexperience of mutuality in personal relations have made him unable to resist being drawn into. He is troubled with a sense of remorse over Morrison's death, which was the merest matter of ill-chance, and this sense associates intimately with a hurt feeling of having betrayed his own life, 'which ought to have been a master-piece of aloofness.' In fact, his long-established equilibrium has been permanently upset; his uneasiness is an obscure recognition of radical discrepancies between his 'scheme' and the necessities of his own nature. Having resolved to keep himself out of reach of further involvements, he discovers with surprise that he now feels lonely:

> 'Where could he have gone to after all these years? Not a single soul belonging to him lived anywhere on earth. Of this fact—not such a remote one, after all—he had only lately become aware; for it is failure that makes a man enter into himself and reckon up his resources. And though he had made up his mind to retire from the world in hermit fashion, yet he was irrationally moved by this sense of loneliness which had come to him in the hour of renunciation. It hurt him. Nothing is more painful than the shock of contradictions that lacerate our intelligence and our feelings.'

It is in this state that Heyst, making a winding-up call at Sourabaya, finds himself exposed once more to a claim on his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

humanity. The inevitability of the plunge that he once more takes, this time before our eyes, is brought poignantly home to us. The whole episode, with its circumstances and setting, is rendered in irresistible immediacy: the torrid desolation of the hotel, the malicious asininity of the manly bearded Schomberg, hotel-keeper and Officer of the Reserve, the limp subjection of his poor charmless rag of a wife, the squalidly sinister Zangiacomos, with their travelling concert-party, and the hopeless isolation of the girl-member who has the ill-luck to touch off Schomberg's inflamed importunities—the present reality of all this gives us at the same time the contained sensitiveness and aloof distinction of Heyst who registers it all, and his action comes as the one possible issue of the pressures evoked. He carries the girl off to the island that was to have been his hermitage.

> ' He had no illusions about her, but his sceptical mind was dominated by his heart '

—That is the account of his relations with her that he gives himself at the outset. The development of those relations and of his sense of them is the process of self-discovery. In spite of the limiting suggestion of the account just quoted, the tenderness he feels towards the girl carries with it, we have seen, ' a greater sense of his own reality than he had ever known in all his life.' And on this follows a discovery that he is not so self-sufficient morally as he had supposed. To the delicately solicitous Davidson he has said:

> ' " I took this course of signalling to you, because to preserve appearances might be of the utmost importance. Not to me, of course. I don't care what people may say, and of course no one can hurt me. I suppose I have done a certain amount of harm, since I allowed myself to be tempted into action. It seemed innocent enough, but all action is bound to be harmful. It is devilish. That is why the world is evil upon the whole. But I have done with it! I shall never lift a little finger again." '

He is to discover, not only that he has not done with the world and with action, but that he cares so much what the world may say as to limit his capacity for action when the urgent need confronts him. Unarmed, and menaced by the sinister intruders upon the island, he deliberates:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

' " But what about that crowbar? Suppose I had it! Could I stand in ambush at the side of the door—this door—and smash the first protruding head . . .? Could I? On suspicion, without compunction with a firm and determined purpose? No, it is not in me . . ." '

Then:

' " Do you know what the world would say? " '

' " It would say that I—that Swede—after luring my friend and partner to his death from mere greed of money, have murdered those unoffending shipwrecked strangers from mere funk. That would be the story whispered—perhaps shouted—certainly spread out, and believed—and *believed*, my dear Lena!" '

That is the effect on Heyst of having learnt earlier from Lena, the girl, Schomberg's slanderous account of the death of Morrison. True, he says that the ruthless action (' And who knows if it isn't really my duty?') isn't 'in' him; but that he should associate his own scruple and inhibition with what people might say and believe is significant of the development he is undergoing.

Melodramatic as is the action of the latter part of the book (and so *seen*—and this is true of the whole book—as to invite the cinematographer), the focus of interest rests upon the subtleties of Heyst's relations with Lena. He finds himself committed to the establishment of a mutuality that is alien to the habit of a life-time —a habit concretely present in his voice and speech, which we hear as if we knew him:

' Heyst's tone was light, with the flavour of playfulness which seasoned all his speeches and seemed to be of the very essence of his thought.'

This tone and manner baffle and alarm the girl; but Heyst is the prisoner of his habit, and his efforts to escape constitute a poignant comedy. Attempting intimacy, he tells her about Morrison (this is before her shattering disclosure of Schomberg's account):

' " You saved a man for fun—is that what you mean? Just for fun? "

" Why this tone of suspicion " remonstrated Heyst. " I suppose the sight of this particular distress was disagreeable to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me. What you call fun came afterwards, when it dawned on me that I was for him a walking, breathing, incarnate proof of the efficacy of prayer. I was a little fascinated by it—and then, could I have argued with him? You don't argue against such evidence, and besides, it would have looked as if I wanted to claim the merit. Already his gratitude was simply frightful. Funny position, wasn't it? The boredom came later, when we lived together on board his ship. I had, in a moment of inadvertence, created for myself a tie. How to define it precisely I don't know. One gets attached in a way to people one has done something for. But is that friendship? I am not sure what it was. I only know that he who forms a tie is lost. The germ of corruption has entered into his soul." '

In so far as she understands, this can serve only to heighten Lena's painful sense of insecurity—her doubt regarding his side of their relations with one another: he is a gentleman, he acted from pity—on what, then, can she build? His difficulty is not merely one of finding a suitable mode of expression; that he can talk like this in attempting intimacy gives us a measure of his inability to keep her realized as a concrete individual sentience to be communicated with—he is the old self-communing if sympathetic Heyst of ' kindness and scorn ':

' " I don't even understand what I have done or left undone to distress you like this."

' He stopped, struck afresh by the physical and moral sense of the imperfection of their relations—a sense which made him desire her constant nearness, before his eyes, under his hand, and which, when she was out of his sight, made her so vague, so illusive and illusory, a promise that could not be embraced and held.'

' " No! I don't see clearly what you mean. Is your mind turned towards the future? ", he interpellated her with marked playfulness, because he was ashamed to let such a word pass his lips. But all his cherished negatives were falling from him one by one.'

Upon this situation supervenes, as if precipitated by his Nothing can break in on us here,' the sinister invasion—the visit

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the world, represented by the languid Jones, his ' secretary ' Ricardo and the anthropoid follower:

> ' " Here they are, the envoys of the outer world. Here they are before you—evil intelligence, instinctive savagery, arm in arm. The brute force is at the back." '

If doubts should arise about the melodramatic boldness of this art (it is deliberately conceived—

> ' " No! Let it come!" Ricardo said viciously [of the thunderstorm that coincides with the dramatic crisis]. " I am in the humour for it! " '),

it seems in place to refer back to considerations thrown out above regarding the ' Elizabethan ' qualities of Conrad's art in *Nostromo*. It is true that *Victory*, which doesn't pretend to the weight and scope of *Nostromo*, has nothing corresponding to its packed and patterned structure of significances. Heyst is studied at length; yet it may be argued that, convincing as he is, the extreme case that he is offered as being really amounts to a kind of Morality representation of the human potentialities he embodies, so that he is fittingly brought up against these embodiments of counter-potentialities. (Of Ricardo we are told that to Lena ' He was the embodied evil of the world '). And they too are convincing (except for Ricardo's love-talk, and a speech of Jones's); they belong to that aspect of Conrad's art which makes us think of Dickens—a Dickens qualified by a quite un-Dickensian maturity: they exist in strict subservience to Conrad's quite un-Dickensian theme and to their function, which is to precipitate Heyst's predicament to an issue in a conclusive action. At the worst we might say about the resolution thus brought about that it hasn't the finer inevitability—that which is never lacking in the incomparably more complex and ambitious *Nostromo:* it is possible to reflect, on the one hand that Heyst had shocking bad luck in the coincidence of Jones and Ricardo with Schomberg; and, on the other, that the antithesis of lust in Ricardo and woman-loathing in Jones on which the *dénouement* depends has no irresistible significance in relation to Conrad's main theme.

But in any case the upshot of the action is to bring that theme to a poignant crystallization. Lena, mortally wounded (though unaware of it), but in triumphant possession of the dagger of which

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she has disarmed Ricardo, dies ' convinced of the reality of her victory over death.' Her relation with Heyst, whom she doesn't understand and who doesn't understand her, has been enough to nerve her for her dealings with the killer; ' she was no longer alone now . . . she was no longer deprived of moral support.' Heyst, who knows her so little that he can immediately before the end assume her to have betrayed him, seduced by Ricardo's male fascinations, had nevertheless got from his relation with her that new sense of reality, and now, after her death, makes to Davidson his tragic pronouncement in favour of trust in life, before firing the bungalow and himself dying in the flames. It is an ironical victory for life, but unequivocally a victory.

The characteristic Conradian sensibility is that of the creator of Heyst; that of the writer so intimately experienced in the strains and starvations of the isolated consciousness, and so deeply aware of the sense in which reality is social, something established and sustained in a kind of collaboration (' I have lived too long within myself,' says Heyst, ' watching the mere shadows and shades of life '). And complementary to Heyst, we realize, are Morrison and Davidson, upright, sensitive and humane individuals, in whom seems to be present a whole background of routine sanity and decency—' we sailors,' the feeling is; for Conrad is as much and as significantly *there* as in Heyst. It is this background (which is reinforced, in his own way, by Wang, the Chinaman) which makes the intention of the ' victory ' unequivocal. The voice that winds up the story in a brief account of the tragic end is Davidson's—Davidson's ' placid voice.'

If a work of so decidedly a lesser order than *Nostromo* has been given what may seem a disproportionate amount of space, that is because of the relation of Heyst to Decoud and to the distinctive tone of the great masterpiece, and the consequent advantage afforded the critic for the analysis of Conrad's sensibility. *Victory* is, at the same time, among those of Conrad's works which deserve to be current as representing his claim to classical standing; and of the novels (as distinguished from *nouvelles* and tales) in that class it is the one that answers most nearly to the stock notion of his genius—though even *Victory* is neither about the Malayan jungle nor about the sea.

The Secret Agent, the one I come to next (not chronologically

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of course—it appeared in 1907, and *Victory* in 1915), is much more indubitably a classic and a masterpiece, and it doesn't answer to the notion at all—which is perhaps why it appears to have had nothing like due recognition. If we call it an ironic novel, it is with the same intention of the adjective as when *Jonathan Wild* is called an ironic novel. To note this is to be reminded, with a fresh shock, of the inertia of conventional valuation that makes *Jonathan Wild* a masterpiece and the classic of its *genre*. For *The Secret Agent* is truly classical in its maturity of attitude and the consummateness of the art in which this finds expression; in the contrast there is nothing for it but to see *Jonathan Wild* as the clumsy piece of hobbledehoydom, artistic and intellectual, that it is. The irony of *The Secret Agent* is not a matter of an insistent and obvious ' significance ' of tone, or the endless repetition of a simple formula. The tone is truly subtle—subtle with the subtlety of the theme; and the theme develops itself in a complex organic structure. The effect depends upon an interplay of contrasting moral perspectives, and the rich economy of the pattern they make relates *The Secret Agent* to *Nostromo*: the two works, for all the great differences between them in range and temper, are triumphs of the same art—the aim of *The Secret Agent*, of course, confines the range, and the kind of irony involves a limiting detachment (we don't look for the secrets of Conrad's soul in *The Secret Agent*).

The matter, the ' story,' is that of a thriller—terrorist conclaves, embassy machinations, bomb-outrage, detection, murder, suicide; and to make, in treating such matter with all the refinements of his craft, a sophisticated moral interest the controlling principle is, we recognize, characteristic Conrad. His irony bears on the egocentric naïveties of moral conviction, the conventionality of conventional moral attitudes, and the obtuse assurance with which habit and self-interest assert absolute rights and wrongs. The pattern of the book is contrived to make us feel the different actors or lives as insulated currents of feeling and purpose—insulated, but committed to co-existence and interaction in what they don't question to be a common world, and sometimes making disconcerting contacts through the insulation.

The Verlocs, husband and wife, take their mutual insulation so for granted as to be mainly unconscious of it. What Mr. Verloc is becomes plain to us very early on. We see him leaving behind

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him the shop, fly-staled and dusty, with its display of revolutionary literature and pornographic goods, and making his way westward towards the Embassy of a Foreign Power. Conrad's London bears something of the same kind of relation to Dickens as Henry James's does in *The Princess Casamassima*. The direct influence of Dickens is unmistakable in certain minor lapses into facetious humour (see, for instance, in the account of Verloc's walk, the bit about No. 1 Chesham Square) from the characteristic astringent dryness. There is also, later, a major instance of obvious and unfortunate indebtedness to Dickens in the fantastic slow-motion macabre of the cab-journey to the almshouse. But *The Secret Agent* (unlike *The Princess Casamassima*) is one of the author's most successful works; its strength is something so utterly outside Dickens's compass as to have enabled Conrad to be influenced by him to purely Conradian ends. And the essential relation to Dickens, it should be plain, is not a matter of being influenced for good or ill, but lies in that energy of vision and characterization which, we have seen, is sometimes as apt to make us say ' Shakespearean ' as ' Dickensian.'

We have it in the interview between Verloc and Mr. Vladimir, First Secretary of the Embassy. The dialogue—and this is so throughout the book, for all the uncertainty about points of English usage apparent on practically every page of Conrad to the end—is consummate in its blend of inevitable naturalness with strict economy of relevance, and the whole is so dramatically realized that we are hardly aware of shifts to description, stage directions or reported thought: it all seems to be enacted before us.

> ' In the pause Mr. Vladimir formulated in his mind a series of disparaging remarks concerning Mr. Verloc's face and figure. The fellow was unexpectedly vulgar, heavy and impudently unintelligent. He looked uncommonly like a master plumber come to present his bill. The First Secretary of the Embassy, from his occasional excursions into the field of American humour, had formed a special notion of that class of mechanic as the embodiment of fraudulent laziness and incompetency.'

Mr. Vladimir himself we see with a vision heightened by Verloc's consternation and disgust:

> ' This anger was complicated by incredulity. And suddenly it dawned upon him that all this was an elaborate joke. Mr.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vladimir exhibited his white teeth in a smile, with dimples on his round, full face posed with a complacent inclination above the bristling bow of his neck-tie. The favourite of intelligent society women had assumed his drawing-room attitude accompanying the delivery of delicate witticisms. Sitting well forward, his white hand upraised, he seemed to hold delicately between his thumb and forefinger the subtlety of his suggestion.'

What he has enjoined upon Verloc, not as a joke, but seriously, as a means of waking up the English police to a sense of their European responsibilities, is a bomb-attack upon Greenwich Observatory. Verloc, threatened in his routine comfort and indolence, feels not only helpless anger but a sense of moral outrage too:

' " It will cost money," Mr. Verloc said, by a sort of instinct.

" That cock won't fight," Mr. Vladimir retorted, with an amazingly genuine English accent. " You'll get your screw every month, and no more till something happens. And if nothing happens very soon you won't get even that. What's your ostensible occupation? What are you supposed to live by? "

" I keep a shop," answered Mr. Verloc.

" A shop! What sort of shop? "

" Stationery, newspapers. My wife— "

" Your what? " interrupted Mr. Vladimir in his guttural Central Asian tones.

" My wife," Mr. Verloc raised his husky voice slightly. " I am married."

" That be damned for a yarn," exclaimed the other in unfeigned astonishment. " Married! And you a professed anarchist, too! What is this confounded nonsense? But I suppose it's merely a matter of speaking. Anarchists don't marry. It's well known. They can't. It would be apostasy." '

Actually Verloc is most respectably married. It is a triumph of the irony that we not only see him as a sympathetic character compared with Mr. Vladimir, but find ourselves on the point of saying that he is in all essentials an ordinary respectable citizen, concerned like any other to maintain himself and his wife in security and comfort: the shop, with its squalid trade and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anarchistic frequentation, and the complicated treacheries of his profession, we see with him as matters of habit and routine, means to the end. In the final scene with his wife, when he tries to make her understand the full enormity of Mr. Vladimir's conduct, he says with righteous exasperation and with all the unction of an outraged moral sense:

> ' " There isn't a murdering plot for the last eleven years that I haven't had my finger in at the risk of my life. There's scores of these revolutionaries I've sent off, with their bombs in their blamed pockets, to get themselves caught on the frontier. The old Baron knew what I was worth to his country. And here suddenly a swine comes along—an ignorant, overbearing swine." '

What Mrs. Verloc is comes out only bit by bit—the perfection of the structure of the book shows itself notably in the way in which we are put in possession of the necessary knowledge about her at the right time. We see her serving in the shop with intimidating aplomb, taking the frequentations of the revolutionists as a matter of course, and, placid good wife to a good husband, being tactfully solicitous about his health and comfort. His business, she knows, entails these and other associates, late absences from home, and occasional trips to the Continent; further, she doesn't inquire:

> ' Mrs. Verloc wasted no portion of this transient life in seeking for fundamental information. This is a sort of economy having all the appearances and some of the advantages of prudence. Obviously it may be good for one not to know too much. And such a view accords very well with constitutional indolence.'

Her mother, who lives with them, and who isn't given to asking questions either, sometimes wonders why Winnie, an attractive girl, married Mr. Verloc. It was, as a matter of fact, for the very reason that leads the mother to withdraw to an almshouse, there to spend in loneliness the remainder of her life: concern for the future of Stevie, the half-witted younger brother. One of the most poignant touches of irony in the book is when Winnie says:

> ' " That poor boy will miss you something cruel. I wish you had thought a little of that, mother." '

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They had both, as a matter of fact, sacrificed themselves for Stevie. And Winnie now, with concealed anxiety, sets to work to impress Verloc with Stevie's devotion to him. Verloc is lost in the obsessing dreads and perplexities associated with the face of Mr. Vladimir; but, with Stevie's existence thus forced on his notice, he realizes Stevie's useful potentialities and is inspired with a timely idea. The result is the violent disintegration of Stevie when he stumbles with the bomb in Greenwich Park, and the immediate bringing home of the responsibility to Verloc by reason of the label, discovered among the rags and fragments by the police, that Winnie has sewn under the collar of Stevie's overcoat in case he should get lost.

There follows one of the most astonishing triumphs of genius in fiction, the final scene between Verloc and his wife. To put it in this way, however, is misleading, since the effect of the scene depends upon what comes before—depends upon the cunning organization of the whole book. We have been put in a position in which we can't fail to realize that, by the sudden knowledge of the death into which Verloc has led Stevie (' might be father and son,' she had fondly remarked, seeing them go off together), Winnie's ' moral nature had been subjected to a shock of which, in the physical order, the most violent earthquake of history could only be a faint and languid rendering.' And we appreciate to the full the moral insulation that has kept the Verlocs, in their decent marital domesticity, strangers to each other.

> ' " Do be reasonable, Winnie. What would it have been if you had lost me! " '

—Here we have the assumption on which Verloc, with magnanimous restraint (for did she not, without telling him, sew in that label which has done the mischief?), undertakes to help his wife to achieve a more reasonable attitude towards the misadventure.

> ' In his affairs of the heart Mr. Verloc had always been carelessly generous, yet always with no other idea than that of being loved for himself. Upon this matter, his ethical notions being in agreement with his vanity, he was completely incorrigible. That this should be so in the case of his virtuous and legal connection he was perfectly certain. He had grown older, fatter,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heavier, in the belief that he lacked no fascination for being loved for his own sake.'

It is extraordinary ironic comedy; the tension is deadly and is to end in murder, but the ways in which Verloc's moral feeling exhibits the naïveties of its relation with his egotism are irresistibly comic. He has intense righteous indignation to work off:

> ' " It wasn't the old Baron who would have had the wicked folly of getting me to call on him at eleven in the morning. There are two or three in this town that, if they had seen me going in, would have made no bones about knocking me on the head sooner or later. It was a silly, murderous trick to expose for nothing a man—like me." '

The development is rich, surprising and inevitable, and disturbing in its reality:

> ' For the first time in his life he was taking that incurious woman into his confidence. The singularity of the event, the force and importance of the personal feelings aroused in the course of this confession, drove Stevie's fate clean out of Mr. Verloc's mind. The boy's stuttering existence of fears and indignations, together with the violence of his end, had passed out of Mr. Verloc's mental sight for a time. For that reason, when he looked up he was startled by the inappropriate character of his wife's stare. It was not a wild stare, and it was not inattentive, but its attention was peculiar and not satisfactory, inasmuch that it seemed concentrated upon some point beyond Mr. Verloc's person. The impression was so strong that Mr. Verloc glanced over his shoulder. There was nothing behind him: there was just the whitewashed wall. The excellent husband of Winnie Verloc saw no writing on the wall. He turned to his wife again . . .'

It is ' the note of wooing '—' " Come here " he said in a peculiar tone from his relaxed posture on the sofa '—that finally gives the signal for the plunge of the knife between his ribs. That knife and its use, by the way, provide an illustration of the economy of form and pattern that gives every detail its significance. Not only does Verloc make (from his wife's point of view—' This man took the boy away to murder him ' is the refrain running through her head)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

offensively insensitive use of it when, during the scene, he carves and grossly devours lumps of cold meat; he actually refers to the possibility of a ' stab in the back ' and so prompts her obsessed mind to the action. And early in the book Winnie, whose likeness to Stevie is significantly touched on from time to time, has had to ' take the carving knife away from the boy,' who ' can't stand the notion of any cruelty ' and has been excited by the atrocity literature kept for sale.

Upon the stabbing follows a gruesomely farcical coda in which the gallows-haunted Winnie, whose turn it now is to suppose herself loved for her own sake, clings round the neck of the gallant Comrade Ossipon, who is quite prepared to succeed to Comrade Verloc's bank-account, but is terrified when he discovers to what possibilities of suspicion he has laid himself open.

The scene between Verloc and his wife is balanced (to simplify with an inevitable crudeness, for the pattern is richly packed as well as subtle, and there can be no pretence of suggesting it fairly in summary) by the earlier scene between Chief Inspector Heat of the Special Crimes Department and the Assistant Commissioner. Heat is a magnificently done type, the higher-grade policeman, representative *par excellence* of Law and Order. ' Why not leave it to Heat? ' asks Sir Ethelred, the great Personage, of the Assistant Commissioner.

> ' " Because he is an old departmental hand. They have their own morality. My line of inquiry would appear to him an awful perversion of duty. For him the plain duty is to fix the guilt upon as many prominent anarchists as he can on some slight indications he had picked up in the course of his investigations on the spot; whereas I, he would say, am bent upon vindicating their innocence." '

Actually the Chief Inspector's morality is more interesting than that. When the discovery of the label on the singed rag brings the Greenwich bomb-affair home to Verloc, Heat is faced with a problem: luck having years before put Verloc in his way, he has been using this valuable source of information privately, and with great profit in respect of reputation and promotion. To follow up the clue would bring out all kinds of things and certainly destroy the source.

The incomplete explicitness of the motives in play—an incom-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pleteness that may be said to take the positive form of a kind of resonance of righteous feeling—is rendered with fine ironic subtlety:

> 'He no longer considered it eminently desirable all round to establish publicly the identity of the man who had blown himself up that morning with such horrible completeness. But he was not certain of the view his department would take. A department is to those it employs a complex personality with ideas and fads of its own. It depends on the loyal devotion of its servants, and the devoted loyalty of trusted servants is associated with a certain amount of affectionate contempt, which keeps it sweet, as it were. By a benevolent provision of Nature no man is a hero to his valet, or else the heroes would have to brush their own clothes. Likewise no department appears perfectly wise to the intimacy of its workers. A department does not know so much as some of its servants. Being a dispassionate organism, it can never be perfectly informed. It would not be good for its efficiency to know too much. Chief Inspector Heat got out of the train in a state of thoughtfulness entirely untainted with disloyalty, but not quite free of that jealous mistrust which so often springs on the ground of perfect devotion, whether to women or to institutions.'

During his interview with his chief, the Assistant Commissioner, to whom he listens 'with outward deference (which means nothing, being a matter of duty) and inwardly with benevolent toleration,' he settles down to the resolution of bringing the trail of suspicion home to Michaelis, a ticket-of-leave ex-convict who happens to be the only thoroughly sympathetic member of the revolutionary group:

> '"There will be no difficulty in getting up sufficient evidence against *him*," he said with virtuous complacency. "You may trust me for that, sir."'

He can take this line with the complete assurance of his moral judgment.

> 'It was perfectly legal to arrest that man on the barest suspicion. It was legal and expedient on the face of it. His two former chiefs would have seen the point at once; whereas this

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one, without saying either yes or no, sat there, as if lost in a dream. Moreover, besides being legal and expedient, the arrest of Michaelis solved a little personal difficulty which worried Chief Inspector Heat somewhat. This difficulty had its bearing upon his reputation, upon his comfort, and even upon the efficient performance of his duties. For if Michaelis no doubt knew something about this outrage, the Chief Inspector was fairly certain that he did not know too much. This was just as well. He knew much less—the Chief Inspector was positive—than certain other individuals he had in his mind, but whose arrest seemed to him inexpedient, besides being a more complicated matter, on account of the rules of the game. The rules of the game did not protect so much Michaelis who was an ex-convict. It would be stupid not to take advantage of legal facilities . . .'

When the Assistant Commissioner disconcerts him with an undepartmental scepticism (' Now what is it you've got up your sleeve? '), Heat is not only very annoyed (' " You my boy," he said to himself . . . " you my boy, you don't know your place, and your place won't know you very long either, I bet " '), he is morally outraged:

' He had discovered in this affair a delicate and perplexing side, forcing upon the discoverer a certain amount of insincerity which, under the names of skill, prudence, discretion, turns up at one point or another in most human affairs. He felt at the moment like a tight-rope artist might feel if suddenly, in the middle of the performance, the manager of the Music Hall were to rush out of the proper managerial seclusion and begin to shake the rope.'

His indignation responds musically, as it were, to that of Comrade Ossipon (along with a great deal else) when he hears of the bomb-explosion, and exclaims that ' under the present circumstances it's nothing short of criminal.'

Heat has a further reason for not following up the clue. He has just, in one of the most memorable of the many vivid and pregnant scenes and episodes in the book, had his chance meeting in the narrow by-street with the Professor, who made the bomb. The Chief Inspector is not in any case in his element where revolutionists are concerned:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'At the beginning of his career Chief Inspector Heat had been concerned with the more energetic forms of thieving. He had gained his spurs in that sphere, and naturally enough had kept for it, after his promotion to another department, a feeling not very far removed from affection. Thieving was not a sheer absurdity. It was a form of human industry, perverse indeed, but still an industry exercised in an industrious world; it was work undertaken for the same reason as the work in potteries, in coal mines, in fields, in tool-grinding shops. It was labour, whose practical difference from the other forms of labour consisted in the nature of its risk, which did not lie in ankylosis, or lead-poisoning, or fire-damp, or gritty dust, but in what may be briefly defined in its own special phraseology as "Seven years hard." Chief Inspector Heat was, of course, not insensible to the gravity of moral differences. But neither were the thieves he had been looking after. They submitted to the severe sanctions of a morality familiar to Chief Inspector Heat with a certain resignation. They were his fellow-citizens gone wrong because of imperfect education Chief Inspector Heat believed; but allowing for that difference, he could understand the mind of a burglar, because, as a matter of fact, the mind and the instincts of a burglar are of the same kind as the mind and the instincts of a police officer. Both recognize the same conventions and have a working knowledge of each other's methods and of the routine of their respective trades. They understand each other, which is advantageous to both, and establishes a sort of amenity in their relations. Products of the same machine, one classed as useful and the other as noxious, they take the machine for granted in different ways, but with a seriousness essentially the same.'

The Professor, physically insignificant, but happy in the superiority given him by the bomb he always carries on his person and by his reputation for a reckless readiness to touch it off rather than be arrested, represents revolutionary abnormality in its most disconcerting and repugnant form:

'After paying this tribute to what is normal in the constitution of society (for the idea of thieving appeared to his instinct as normal as the idea of property), Chief Inspector Heat felt very angry with himself for having stopped . . .'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'The encounter did not leave behind with Inspector Heat that satisfactory sense of superiority the members of the police force get from the unofficial but intimate side of their intercourse with the criminal classes, by which the vanity of power is soothed, and the vulgar love of domination over our fellow-creatures is flattered as worthily as it deserves.

'The perfect anarchist was not recognized as a fellow-creature by Chief Inspector Heat. He was impossible—a mad dog to be left alone . . . This being the strong feeling of Inspector Heat, it appeared to him just and proper that this affair should be shunted off its obscure and inconvenient track, leading goodness knows where, into a quiet (and lawful) siding called Michaelis.'

Conrad himself shows an unmistakable dislike of revolutionists. In *The Secret Agent* he explains them mainly in terms of indolence (though the Professor and Michaelis are contrasting and complementary special cases). In *Under Western Eyes* (1911), which comes up for notice next, his revolutionists are Russians, and, while his presentment is hardly more flattering, his general reflections are on different lines:

'"... in a real revolution—not a simple dynastic change or a mere reform of institutions—in a real revolution the best characters do not come to the front. A violent revolution falls into the hands of narrow-minded fanatics and of tyrannical hypocrites at first. Afterwards comes the turn of all the pretentious intellectual failures of the time. Such are the chiefs and the leaders. You will notice that I have left out the mere rogues. The scrupulous and the just, the noble, humane, and devoted natures; the unselfish and the intelligent may begin a movement—but it passes away from them. They are not the leaders of a revolution. They are its victims: the victims of disgust, of disenchantment—often of remorse. Hopes grotesquely betrayed, ideals caricatured—that is the definition of revolutionary successes. There have been in every revolution hearts broken by such successes."'

The old teacher of languages, the presence in the story of 'western eyes,' is here warning Natalia, sister of Haldin the heroic assassin; and the revolutionists we are shown—

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> ' " Bearers [comments Razumov] of the spark to start an explosion which is meant to change fundamentally the lives of so many millions in order that Peter Ivanovitch should be the head of a state " '

—leave no room for doubt that he speaks for Conrad. In Peter Ivanovitch, ' the heroic fugitive,' eloquent, woman-exploiting egoist, and ' Russian Mazzini,' we have, we suspect, an actual historical person.

The space given to *The Secret Agent* doesn't leave much for *Under Western Eyes*. But the *The Secret Agent* is one of Conrad's two supreme masterpieces, one of the two unquestionable classics of the first order that he added to the English novel, and, in its own way, it is like *Nostromo* in the subtle and triumphant complexity of its art—like, too, in not having had due critical recognition. *Under Western Eyes* cannot be claimed with the same confidence for that order, though it is a most distinguished work, and must be counted among those upon which Conrad's status as one of the great English masters securely rests. It is related to *The Secret Agent* not only by the revolutionists, but by the theme of isolation (for this figures a great deal in that book—Winnie Verloc jumps to her death from the night Channel-steamer at least as much to escape the void in which Stevie's death followed by Ossipon's desertion has left her as from fear of the gallows). *Under Western Eyes* has for theme moral isolation as represented by the case of the Russian student Razumov.

Never having known parents, and without connexions, Razumov even at the outset of the history is ' as lonely in the world as a fish swimming in the sea.' He is wholly bent on his career, and we are told characteristically:

> ' There was nothing strange in the student Razumov's wish for distinction. A man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love.'

His prospects are destroyed by the uninvited confidence shown in him by Haldin, a student revolutionist, who, having brought off a political assassination, takes refuge in Razumov's rooms. From the moment of finding him there Razumov is doomed to endure a trapped and tormented conscience in utter loneliness:

> ' Who knows what true loneliness is—not the conventional

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

word, but the naked terror? To the lonely themselves it wears a mask. The most miserable outcast hugs some memory or some illusion. Now and then a fatal conjunction of events may lift the veil for an instant. For an instant only. No human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad.

Razumov had reached that point of vision.'

This is his state as he tramps the streets in the winter night, crystallizing his decision to give Haldin up.

'Indeed, it could hardly be called a decision. He had simply discovered what he had meant to do all along. And yet he felt the need of some other mind's sanction.'

Giving Haldin up doesn't save Haldin's career. He is involved, and the police have a use for him. He seeks to terminate his interview with Councillor Mikulin, a creepily convincing Russian bureaucrat, by asserting his 'right to be done once for all with that man,' and 'to retire—simply to retire':

'An unhurried voice said—

"Kirylo Sidorovitch."

Razumov at the door turned his head.

"To retire," he repeated.

"Where to?" asked Councillor Mikulin softly.'

Razumov's mental conflicts and stresses during the Part I that ends on this note are rendered from the inside with extraordinary power. We are thus put in a position to appreciate the observations from the outside recorded through the English teacher of languages at Geneva, where Razumov, now a spy among the revolutionists, complicates his problem by falling in love with Haldin's sister. The earlier inside account of his tormented consciousness shows the influence of Dostoievsky, and the effect is to bring out the antipathetic detachment of Conrad's radical attitude from all that Dostoievsky stands for. If Conrad knows his Dostoievsky, he sees him through 'western eyes,' and sees him, along with 'the lawlessness of autocracy and lawlessness of revolution,' as among the 'moral conditions ruling over a large part of this earth's surface' that the old language-teacher, in telling Razumov's story, perceives himself to be rendering.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Having, by confession to Haldin's sister and to the revolutionists, escaped at last from the worst of his moral isolation, Razumov ends, a cripple, his ear-drums deliberately burst by the champion revolutionary killer, in the less intolerable isolation of stone deafness.

Moral isolation is again the theme of *Chance* (1914), which is again, a very different kind of book—different from *Under Western Eyes* and from the other novels. Floral de Barral, daughter of the great de Barral, grand-style financial adventurer, suffers first, at the time of her father's *débâcle,* the shock of a fiendish moral assault from her governess (Flora having no mother—having no one but her father); then, her father in jail, suffers further bad luck in the form of odious relatives, and has bad luck again even in her good luck: her rescue by the chivalrous Captain Anthony, 'son of the poet.'

We have, in fact, a variant of the Heyst-Lena situation: while each needs, neither knows, the other, and the nature and circumstances of the rescue leave each exquisitely and inhibitingly scrupulous about taking advantage of the other's helplessness or chivalry. The woman is not, this time, the minor focus of interest, but rather the reverse—Flora is the central character of the book; and Anthony, on the other hand, reintroduces the Lord Jim theme:

> 'The inarticulate son had set up a standard for himself with that need for embodying in his conduct the dreams, the passion, the impulses the poet puts into the arrangements of verses, which are dearer to him than his own self—and may make his own self appear sublime in the eyes of other people, and even in his own eyes.
>
> Did Anthony wish to appear sublime in his own eyes?'

Again:

> 'If Anthony's love had been as egoistic as love generally is it would have been greater than the egoism of his vanity—or of his generosity, if you like.'

In any case, 'She beat him at his own honourable game.' The question about her is given here (the pilgrimage is a rendezvous with Anthony in the East End):

> 'She had had an ugly pilgrimage, but whether of love or necessity, who could tell.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The technical distinction of *Chance* has not lacked recognition. That no doubt is because *Chance* invites the description ' technical triumph ' in a way which *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent* do not. One's sense that the ' doing ' (see the significant terms of Henry James's appreciation in the essay called ***The New Novel, 1914,*** to be found in *Notes on Novelists*) was not so strictly as in their case a preoccupation with getting the essential theme or themes ' done ' is perhaps not fair—not fair, expressed so. The fact is that Conrad's essential interest here didn't yield him anything like so rich a pattern as in either of those two books, and the theme indicated by the title, ingeniously exploited as it is in the mode of presentation, has no essential relation with the main theme: chance plays no notably different part from that it must play in any story offering a novelist a study of human nature, and Conrad (it may be suggested) by calling the novel *Chance*—and insisting a great deal on the word —implicitly concedes the critical point in question: the point regarding the difference between *Chance* and the other two.

One tends to make the point a little unfairly because of irritation with Marlow, who is essential to the presentation—

> ' " But we, my dear Marlow, have the inestimable advantage of understanding what is happening to others " '

—but is also, in a way touched on earlier, too easy a convenience:

> ' Marlow emerged out of the shadow of the book-case to get himself a cigar from a box which stood on a little table by my side. In the full light of the room I saw in his eyes that slightly mocking expression with which he habitually covers up his sympathetic impulses of mirth and pity before the unreasonable complications the idealism of mankind puts into the simple but poignant problem of conduct on this earth.'

This suggests well enough the kind of direct injection of tone and attitude that Marlow licenses, and the consequent cheapening effect. Nevertheless, the view from the outside, the correlated glimpses from different angles, the standing queries and suspended judgments—this treatment, applied by means of Marlow and the complication of witnesses, is, quite plainly, the kind demanded by the essential undertaking of the book. And it is applied successfully; even the most difficulty part of all, the rendering of the ' tension of the false

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

situation ' on board the *Ferndale,* comes off pretty well (though there is a touch of sentimentality about the handling of Flora).

The genius is amply apparent in *Chance.* It is most apparent in the force of realization with which the characters are evoked, and which has led above to the mention of Dickens. That which suggests Dickens in *Chance*—and there is a great deal of it—is all strongly characteristic Conrad. There is the Shipping Office and old Powell-Socrates, with his ' tall hat very far at the back of his head . . . a full unwrinkled face, and such clear-shining eyes that his grey beard looked quite false on him, stuck on for a disguise'; there are the Fynes—the comedy of Marlow's intercourse with them is characteristic and good; the great de Barral himself; Flora's odious relative, the cardboard box manufacturer, who ' had all the civic virtues in their meanest form '; Franklin the mate—

> ' The mate who, on account of his peculiar build, could not turn his head quite freely, twisted his thick trunk slightly, and ran his black eyes in the corners towards the steward.'

There we have an illustration of the vivid particularity with which things are *seen.* For another, here is the sinister old de Barral:

> ' gliding away with his walk which Mr. Powell described to me as being as level and wary as his voice. He walked as if he were carrying a glass full of water on his head.'

The solemn little Fyne, irreproachable Civil Servant, is epitomized in the picture of him escaping with his gravity from under the noses of the dray-horses:

> ' He skipped wildly out of the way and up on the curbstone with a purely instinctive precision; his mind had nothing to do with his movements. In the middle of his leap, and while in the act of sailing gravely through the air, he continued to relieve his outraged feelings.'

The distinction of mind is as apparent in *Chance* as this kind of vitality; it is certainly a remarkable novel.

There is no other that need be discussed. *The Rover,* the latest one finished, with its pathos of retrospect and its old man's sense of the unreality of life, comes plainly from a mind conscious of being at the end of its own days: it has a remote vividness, but

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no central energy. The unfinished *Suspense* so little lives up to its title that the published part of it is hard to get through. But *Nostromo, The Secret Agent, Under Western Eyes, Chance, Victory*—it is an impressive enough tale of books (all produced within a decade and a half) for any man to have to his credit. And—not to the credit of English literary culture or English criticism—it went, the evidence obliges us to conclude, without recognition. True, Conrad enjoyed a vogue in the early nineteen-twenties, when he was bringing out a series of inferior novels; and he had been for some time an established name. But—for all the odd success of *Chance*—he had too good reason to feel that he was regarded as the author of *Lord Jim;* the writer of stories about the sea, the jungle and the islands, who had made some curious ventures outside his beat, but would yet, one hoped, return to it. Perhaps what may be found against his name in the new *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* gives the still prevalent view.

But he was not only by far the greatest of the Edwardians; there is more to be said than that. Scott, Thackeray, Meredith and Hardy are commonly accounted great English novelists: if the criterion is the achievement in work addressed to the adult mind, and capable as such of engaging again and again its full critical attention, then Conrad is certainly a greater novelist than the four enumerated. This, which may seem a more striking claim to some critics than to others, is merely a way of insisting on the force of the judgment that Conrad is among the very greatest novelists in the language.

F. R. LEAVIS.

JOSEPH CONRAD : POLAND'S ENGLISH GENIUS, by M. C. Bradbrook (*C.U.P.*, 3/6).

This book came out too late to be referred to in the above critique. The reader will find in it guidance to works not discussed above, and, besides judgments confirming the present writer, some challenging differences of critical stress.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

A PLEA FOR ENGLISH BALLET.

> ' To-day a respect for tradition is not regarded with the dire suspicion or open revolt that it has been subjected to in the immediate past, and sanity is on the verge of being regarded as an acceptable condition of even the artistic genius; a variety of further reasonings are bringing back law and order into our lives. We need not trouble to enumerate these, but one more superficial point may be mentioned, namely, that such a state of mind encourages a sense of proportion in all walks of art and life.'
>
> Ninette de Valois, *Invitation to the Ballet.*

Even the best authorities now seem inclined to the view that the Red Air Force isn't made exclusively out of cardboard and string; and Philip Jordan assures us from Moscow that workers read Poushkin in restaurants. And so it should not come as a surprise to learn that one of the Soviet Government's first measures after the German invasion was to order the State Opera and Ballet into the safety of the interior of the country (rather naturally they refused to go). In England, however, the Sadler's Wells Ballet has never received any official help or recognition, and with the B.B.C.'s theories about the sanctity of supply-and-demand before one, there can be no justification for counting on enlightenment from another semi-State venture like the proposed National Theatre. And now, at a moment when the ballet in England seems to be triumphing over the obstacles of private enterprise, the demand for man-power has created difficulties for the Company of a far more critical order. Of course, our problem is quite different from that of the U.S.S.R., yet one may still hope not to see Margot Fonteyn in the uniform of the A.T.S.

That officialdom should be chary of admitting exceptions to its rules is in the nature of things. But that so few people seem to realize, without prompting, what is actually involved reveals clearly a state of general ignorance about the very nature of ballet, and of the kind and quality of effort it involves.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of course English Ballet has never engaged the attentions of those sections of the community, both financial and artistic, which wield power in this country. The Russian Companies which visited England between 1920 and 1938 offered attractions which it would have been foolish of the fashionable world to neglect; for their artistic achievements, which were considerable indeed, were seldom permitted to obscure the problem of cash returns. At any rate, English Ballet grew up in the last ten years almost unnoticed by the influential public, with the result that it has gathered about it a faithful and enthusiastic audience (of comparatively limited means) which has from the first been deprived of the help it might legitimately have expected to receive in forming its likes and dislikes: except such help as the Company has itself been able to give in its public classes and demonstrations. And so, in the absence of a critical public which might have undertaken even the most elementary clarification of terms and aims, and lacking of course all but the most meagre financial assistance, the Company has been forced to an excessive degree to rely upon its own resources and to shape its own development. And thus, while the Company's artistic management (Ninette de Valois, Constant Lambert, and Frederick Ashton) give every appearance in their work and writing of being people of considerable foresight and wisdom and also of being prepared to welcome informed and constructive criticism from outside, they are faced with a public whose enthusiasm is unquestioned, but which is composed in the main of people who would make no claim to critical acumen; or else of people of limited artistic training who are baffled, in the absence of competent assistance, by the very complexity of ballet and who come to doubt in the end whether ballet is an art at all. And such a state of affairs leads naturally to a situation in which there is no wide comprehension, at a critical moment, of the fact that ballet is of all arts the most precarious and delicate and that its very existence depends on the maintenance by *individual* dancers of its tradition and continuity. For the ballet, unlike any other art, has no life or being apart from its executants.

And yet, should it happen that the Company is allowed to survive intact (and my remaining remarks must assume this), then the way in which English ballet has developed and the apparently unsatisfactory nature of its existence are not without their important

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

redeeming features. In discussing the lack of attention that the ballet has received from the (theoretically) critical sections of the community and in touching on the confusion or adulation of the public which is interested, I carefully phrased my remarks in rather mild terms. Quite enough has already been said and written about the need for critical standards and the deplorable consequences of balletomania. Under the circumstances it seems far more profitable to approach the matter from quite another angle, and to ask what it is reasonable to hope for in the present situation and how—and this is obviously the crux—this hope can be realized. And if one naturally feels a certain diffidence in offering to consider such large and in certain respects specialized topics, the complete lack of competition makes the task a little easier; indeed, it seems safe to say that if the problem of the function and importance of ballet is not discussed here and now, there seems no reason to suppose that it is ever going to be discussed.

Of course, if any encouragement were needed, it comes above all from the Sadler's Wells Company itself. The last programme of ballets which the Company gave in London (and it was already without two of its leading male dancers) included the complete versions of *Le Lac des Cygnes, Giselle, Coppelia,* and also the first performances with orchestra of *The Wise Virgins* (music by Bach choreography by Ashton) and *Orpheus and Eurydice* (choreography by de Valois). When one adds that on occasions the performances were first-class, and that at the final performance (the third of the day) *Le Lac des Cygnes* revealed Fonteyn as unquestionably one of the really great dancers, certainly finer than any of her contemporaries in the de Basil Company, and if one realizes finally the strain of continuous dancing and travelling, then the Company's achievement is seen in its proper perspective. Indeed it is now possible to speak without any misgivings of a genuinely English classical ballet. But the main point to note is that this achievement is partly the consequence of the self-dependence mentioned above. The lack of immediate recognition from financial or artistic circles not only threw the Company on its own resources, but gave it freedom to develop those resources as seemed artistically wisest. The financial world isn't overstocked with artistic enlightenment, and all too often the artistic world seems content to conduct its affair on a stock-exchange morality; and consequently the Sadler's Wells

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ballet was fortunate in being entrusted to the virtually dictatorial care of Ninette de Valois and Constant Lambert. With the result that it has now reached maturity without finding itself at the beck and call of any particular clique or interest, and having from sheer necessity cultivated a self-critical humility which is all too rare in the artistic world to-day. It is undoubtedly the way in which new choreographic undertakings have always been conceived and checked in relation to the classical tradition that has given the Company its vigour and assurance. As Miss de Valois has written:

> 'The very youthfulness of English choreography places us under the influence of recognized schools of production laid down by our contemporary masters. It is possible to believe that their influence may be felt and shown more in England in the future than in any other country, and, provided such inspiration does not become a thoughtless and hysterical imitation, it is the best thing that could happen. But the balance will have to come from the choreographers themselves under the guidance of a few far-seeing music and ballet critics.'

Unfortunately, while the English choreographers have undoubtedly exercised a considerable discretion in their work, they have so far lacked the critical guidance demanded by Miss de Valois; and in some respects they have suffered in consequence, as in the standard of décor they have been able to maintain.

Admittedly many varieties of competence are required of the ballet critic, and his work will have to start on an almost blank sheet. For instance, one of the first tasks which badly needs clearing up is the precise, or even approximate, significance of the term 'classical' as applied to ballet. The confusion may be illustrated by saying that a Romantic ballet, like *Giselle,* is generally held to provide the ideal vehicle for a classical dancer, like Margot Fonteyn. On the other hand, by contrast *Le Lac des Cygnes* is a Classical ballet, despite the fact that Tchaikowsky's music exhibits intrinsically romantic virtues. The issue here is perhaps not the most important, but it reveals clearly the need for a careful survey of the ground before any extended or satisfactory criticism of the ballet is possible. For, in the process of solving these difficulties, one would be compelled to determine (if possible) the relation of the ballet and of ballet standards to other arts, particularly music and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sculpture; and from there to consider to what extent the dancer's style (classical, *demi-caractère,* etc.) is bound up with a more or less profound sensitivity to other arts. And, if one ever reached this stage of omniscience, there would still remain—or would it by then have solved itself?—the recurrent question of the inherent unsuitability of some music for balletic treatment, and if so wherein this unsuitability lies. And so far I have omitted altogether such diverse difficulties as the rôle of lighting in ballet-production (the question raises itself forcibly, after seeing *The Haunted Ballroom* and *Apparitions*); or the significance of the central-European school of dancing. And having satisfied himself that he has mastered something of the general confusion surrounding ballet (and I need hardly say that an understanding, if no more, of the technical side of dancing is essential), the critic has still to apply his knowledge to an actual ballet, and to be prepared to offer practical criticism of any work. Miss de Valois has suggested the following table as a basis for analysis (I purposely take my quotations from Miss de Valois' book, *Invitation to the Ballet,* as my concern is with English Ballet, and she more than anyone else can speak for it); one is to consider

' (1) If the music concerned demands the collaboration of movement to complete its meaning.

(2) If so, how far does the choreography fulfil its mission of interpretation regarding the following points:

(a) General musicality.
(b) Phrasing.
(c) Climax.
(d) Orchestration.

(3) The relationship existing between the scenario and the music:

(a) A natural counterpoint of the musical composition.
(b) An uncomfortable imposition.

If the scenario responds to (a), has the choreographer succeeded in achieving a fusion of scenario and choreography which can be held to emphasise the already existing collaboration between scenario and music? If the scenario is in class (b), has he allowed the choreography to predominate to the point of reducing the scenario to a minor rôle in the background?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(4) If the choreographer, in construction, has not misled the dancers, to what extent do the artists interpret the music and show emphasis, shading and precision as reflected by the orchestration of the ballet?' . . . and so on.

Actually, the difficulty of ballet criticism may be great, but it is far from being insuperable; and my emphasis on the complexity of the problem is intended not as a deterrent, but as a means of suggesting that ballet and ballet-criticism demand, of their very nature, a multitude of talents and interests. Ballet is essentially an impure art, and it is this impurity which gives it a potential importance, in relation to the other arts, which has for too long been forgotten.

That the importance of the ballet in its bearing on the other arts was once clearly understood is clear when one remembers that the Diaghileff era of ballet arose out of the movement associated with the journal, *Mir Isskoustva*. Diaghileff came to the ballet from the midst of other arts, and his subsequent productions revealed his conviction that ballet is a focus of various forms of artistic activity, rather than in any way an exotic growth. Only so long as the ballet draws its strength from the best that is being thought and done in other art-forms, in music, painting, sculpture, architecture and even literature—in short, only so long as it lives and grows within the larger artistic context can it retain its vitality and equilibrium. And that, for no particular fault of its own, it is not doing to-day. Indeed, it is a feature of the artistic activity of this country to be disrupt and unco-ordinated. In an age of specialisms, the arts permit themselves all too little interchange of ideas, and cater for largely distinct subdivisions of the community. And the effect of this on the ballet, and above all on the ballet public, cannot be other than deplorable. It means not only that the ballet runs a danger of becoming parochial, but that its public is tending to a rigid exclusiveness of interest (like Mr. Haskell, who claims to have no interests outside the ballet except travelling—with ballet Companies). For balletomania is simply the product of an ingrown enthusiasm, unchecked by contact with other sources of interest; and as such it runs counter to the very nature of ballet itself, whose tentacles should always be groping into the remotest corners of the artistic world.

In short, the need for a new *Mir Isskoustva* is not only pressing, but there is reason to believe that it has a potential public. This

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is not the place for a blue-print of such a publication (though one is contemplated; post-war planning should not be the present monopoly of Mr. Greenwood), but a few very general considerations may perhaps be made by way of conclusion. As far as the ballet itself is concerned, there can be little doubt that the time has come (or it may soon be too late) for a clarification of the issues involved, and ' for the guidance of a few far-seeing music and ballet critics.' And this task can only be undertaken, for reasons that are obvious enough, in a journal appearing regularly (bi-monthly?) and allowing for the exchange of expert and even amateur opinion; the elaboration of a critical method and vocabulary cannot be achieved overnight or by any one person, but implies careful and even prolonged nurture. But, as has been implied, the problem of ballet criticism and appreciation inevitably leads elsewhere, and even though ballet were the ostensible end of such a journal, it is clear that one would almost equally be called upon to deal with music and visual art in their own right. In fact the journal envisaged would concern itself with almost any artistic activity, though with ballet as its focus of attention. And as such there is no reason to suppose that its influence would be small or in any way limited to a specialized audience. To mention only three unrelated instances which suggest themselves, such a journal, had it been in existence during the last few years, might have offered T. S. Eliot the incentive to develop, in print and even in practice, the few fascinating hints he has thrown out on the subject of ballet; it might have interested John Piper in stage décor; the recent production at the Old Vic of *The Tempest,* which had obvious balletic leanings, might have been entrusted to Miss de Valois. And in each case it would not only have been the ballet that would have gained by the association. For needless to say the production of such a journal implies correlated *activity*; the analytic and instructional classes for the Gallery which the Sadler's Wells Company used to run before the war would only be one of a number of undertakings which before long might reasonably extend to lunch-time concerts and art exhibitions (and not necessarily confined to London).

And this last proposal leads to the final consideration encouraging the whole scheme. Undoubtedly there exists a public for all forms of art which has until recently been untouched. The extraordinary success of such experiments as the National Gallery

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Concerts, the art-exhibitions organized by the British Institute of Adult Education, the discussion-groups organized by the Army Educational Corps, the Pelican books, C.E.M.A.'s. dramatic activities and concerts, the ballet itself when on tour—the genuine interest which has greeted this wealth of war-time artistic activity testifies to a perhaps unsuspected integrity and vigour in the community as a whole. And yet no real steps have been taken to co-ordinate the artistic supply of the country, or to foster a critical understanding of art or of its function in society. There is no central body; there are, with one or two exceptions, no journals. The moral is plain. If the public for art is not to be lost, and if it is to be protected from the financial and artistic racketeers, some step has to be taken very soon. Not only does the public need (and the public I have in mind is so far without any entrenched prejudices or debased standards), not only does it need, for all the arts involved, the guidance of informed opinion if each individual is to be able to develop his own critical resources; it also needs a common centre of gravity to draw its multitudinous enthusiasms together and revitalise them. And no activity caters legitimately for a wider variety of artistic interest, and none, of its very nature, fosters a more catholic and all-embracing concern with art, than ballet. But the next step does not lie with the Sadler's Wells Company; it is only the vitality and quality of their work during these last ten years that makes it possible to envisage next steps at all.

BORIS FORD.

THE 'THIRTIES REPLY

FOLIOS OF NEW WRITING, Spring, 1941 (The Hogarth Press, 5/-).

The chief interest of the Spring number of *New Writing* lies in a section containing four discussions of Virginia's Woolf's recent essay, *The Leaning Tower*. Roughly speaking, Mr. Upward writes as a Marxist, Mr. MacNeice as one of the poets criticized in the essay, and Mr. Coombes as a member of the working class, while Mr. Lehmann, who was closely associated with Mrs. Woolf in publishing much of the work under discussion, adds a postscript summing up the debate. The whole controversy makes dis-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appointing reading because the replies show so little understanding of the points Mrs. Woolf was trying to make. They seize on sentences dragged out of their contexts, attribute to the author opinions which she did not express and niggle with the tedious casuistry of the debating hall over unessential or irrelevant matters. To substantiate these charges I shall consider the separate replies in a little more detail.

Mr. Upward, manipulating the counters of Marxist criticism, says that Mrs. Woolf's views are distorted because she sees the writers of the 'thirties from the standpoint of the dying world. He gives her no credit for making an attempt to reach some impartial ground for common humanity. Nowhere in the essay was it suggested that these writers would have done better to evade the social and political issues of their time—indeed, Mrs. Woolf said explicitly that for any sensitive person such a course was out of the question. Nor did she say that bitterness and didacticism in themselves made good writing impossible: Mr. Upward's references to the Hebrew prophets and Dante are beside the point. She did say that the attacks made by this group of writers upon bourgeois society were at once violent and half-hearted (unlike the Hebrew prophets and Dante) and that their work was often empty and destructive, because they could only talk in the abstract about the new classless society and the common human values which they desiderated: they failed to present them concretely in any profound imaginative realization. Their didacticism, in short, was uninspired. Mr. Upward's main argument seems to be in two parts: (1) the real reason for the limitations of these writers was that they hesitated to line up wholeheartedly on the Socialist front[1]; (2) they weren't so limited after all. He begins by rejecting Mrs. Woolf's reason for their hesitation, but later, with apparently no sense of contradiction, partially concedes it—' their hesitation was increased by the fact that their economic position enabled them temporarily at least to devote most of their energy to writing.' The positive defence is like the unsupported claims of a Sunday reviewer:

---

[1]His example of the true socialist writer, Gorki, is rather unfortunate when taken together with the following, from Mr. Acton's essay on Chinese fiction later in this number: ' He is too fine an artist to be drearily all message, like Gorki in his later novels.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> ' There is much in the poetry of Auden and Spender which is fit to stand beside the great poetry of the past. The " leaning tower " writers are abler and more serious than most of their detractors. No better work than theirs appeared in England during the 'thirties.'

Abler and more serious than Mrs. Woolf? And even if *Marina* and *The Root and the Flower* are negligible, must we lower our standards to what is available only?

Mr. MacNeice, like Mr. Upward, gives the impression that Mrs. Woolf's criticisms have got under his skin. He attributes to her an over-simplified view of nineteenth-century history (at least an exaggeration of her account) and then attacks it with arguments about the revolutionary doctrines of Shelley and Wordsworth, the *malaise* of Tennyson and Mr. Spender's theories about Henry James. Like Mr. Upward, he wrongly accuses Mrs. Woolf of attacking his generation ' for being conditioned by its conditions ' and for being didactic. He misconstrues her query ' How can a writer who has no first-hand experience of a towerless, of a classless society, create that society? '—which in its context refers to imaginative creation and does *not* premise the impossibility of willed social change. He says that Spender stands in the same relation to Marx as Shelley to Godwin and Rousseau: one might comment that the ' new spirit of hopefulness which Mr. MacNeice finds in Spender's lyrics is no more poetically convincing than Shelley's millennial rhapsodies. His suggested comparison of *Mrs. Dalloway* with *Mr. Norris* still leaves many of us persuaded that the former, though not Virginia Woolf's best, shows up the latter as shallow and pretentious. His reply to criticism of the ' bastard language ' of the poets of the 'thirties, that Shakespeare wrote in a bastard language too, is more smart than modest; he should have reflected that a mixture is not the same thing as an organic compound.

It is a relief to turn to Mr. Coombes, who puts forward with humility and without animus the point of view of one who has been denied the economic and educational advantages of the Tower. He gives a balanced account of the relative disadvantages on each side, and suggests ways of bridging the gulf, but he tends to regard literature too much as documentary comment on various types of occupation. Would Lawrence really have been a greater writer if

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he had ' remained with his people and the miners '? How can any writer reach the universal in human nature without adopting as far as possible a viewpoint more or less outside (or inside) all classes?

This debate most powerfully emphasizes the contemporary absence of any common language for critical discussion, let alone any free play of critical ideas. Plainly the acceptance of the 'Thirties group among their friends and reviewers is so much taken for granted that they resent dispassionate criticism as personal insult and explain it away as political prejudice. They are the Movement, and comparisons with Keats or Shakespeare come naturally to them. They have built up among themselves a whole system of criticism involving valuations and distinctions which give the innocent enquirer the notion of a vast ordered hierarchy of reputations. If to the outsider these appear capricious valuations and distinctions without differences, then obviously he must be swayed by ulterior motives.

A perfect example of this sort of ' criticism ' is the concluding article, an account of the work of Henry Green by Walter Allen. It has a judicious air, a suggestion of ranging over a wide field of reference, and the writer is clearly at pains to avoid a narrow political view of literature. But he accepts without question all the current valuations: ' the best contemporary writers [in prose] . . . Isherwood and Orwell and Graham Greene '; ' to use Conolly's words '; ' Calder Marshall . . . one of the leading theorists of contemporary fiction '; ' it can rest, I believe, on the same shelf as the best of Firbank ' (a hang-over from the previous fashionable literary set). At the same time there is a solemn analysis of Mr. Green's tediously affected prose and even a reference to the influence upon it of Sweet's *Old English Reader*. (We have an example of Mr. Green's work in this number, the short story *Mr. Jonas*. One gathers that the use of a highly mannered ' poetic ' prose to describe an incident of A.F.S. work is supposed to produce some special effect: it is in fact merely irritating). After all this one is hardly surprised to find Mr. Allen basing his essay on the naïve distinction that in the contemporary movement emphasis has passed ' from technique to content ' while Mr. Green is ' an artist in an older sense ' whose main preoccupation is with style. Form and Content, it seems, are as separable as that.

The only criticism which the young author is likely to run up

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against, in fact, is a pseudo-criticism innocent of all real standards, either because its writers have through ignorance no contact with a vital tradition, or because they have found plausible reasons for not taking the trouble to learn their job. He passes from school into a small closed group at the University which is probably already part of the Movement and on leaving the University he assumes his place in the hierarchy without ever meeting disinterested criticism or adult standards. In such an atmosphere how can good work be produced? The effect of cliques and mutual admiration societies, with the notorious lack of that 'current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power' must be added to Mrs. Woolf's reasons for the barrenness of the 'thirties.

The rest of this number calls for little comment. None of the verse is distinguished: Mr. MacNeice is by no means at his best; Mr. Bain is amateurish; Mr. Lee's affected imagery leaves us cold; Mr. Little imitates Auden and Hopkins; Mr. Drinan mingles, not very happily, Gaelic landscape, contemporary economics and echoes of Yeats and Eliot. Of the stories, Miss Howard and Mr. Macdonagh reach a respectable magazine level; Mr. Pritchett's reminiscence of a lower middle class boyhood are a little livelier, but hasn't he done this several times already, and rather better? The essay on Chinese literature by Harold Acton contains some useful information, but the two translated stories are not very impressive samples.

The maintenance of a periodical where good new work could be published if it appeared is most certainly desirable, and Mr. Lehmann's efforts have received sufficient praise. But the continued mediocrity of *New Writing* is such that we cannot join the critics of five continents who have praised the wartime issues (blurb) on any other point. Why, one wonders, looking at the list of extravagant encomiums from all parts of the Empire and all types of periodical, is such enthusiasm provoked by work so null? It seems more than likely that there is some connexion between the attitude of the reviewers to the Movement and that of the members of the Movement to each other. In other words, if you cry up each other's wares long enough and loud enough a gullible public soon becomes unable to discriminate and will accept at your own valuation anything you like to put before it.

R. G. Cox.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CRUMBS FROM THE BANQUET

POINTS OF VIEW, by T. S. Eliot, edited by John Hayward. (*Sesame Books, Faber,* 3/6).

This selection from Mr. Eliot's prose writings is made under four heads—' literary criticism,' ' dramatic criticism,' ' individual authors ' and ' religon and society.' Mr. John Hayward's efforts at book-making have in the past been attended with considerably more success than is customary in such cases; his achievement in this case is less unequivocal. A circular accompanying the review suggests that the selection might be suitable for use in schools; the shortcomings that I have in mind can best be focussed by saying that that is exactly what it isn't. One can sympathise with Mr. Hayward's difficulties; he was being asked to fill a non-existent gap. To select passages of ' prose ' representative of an author's style and thought is all very well when the author is a C. E. Montague or a Lytton Strachey, whose whole work might have written with an eye to being selected from; but the essence of Mr. Eliot's best critical practice, one might have thought, was its application to the specific situation, its unwillingness to leave a generalization in the air without tying it down to some particular piece of verse or some particular poet. But when you are reconnoitring an author's work for salient points, it is inevitably the generalization that takes the eye and the *ad hoc* criticism that is pruned off. And so we find a series of little gobbets of a page or two or three apiece, headed (titles by Mr. Hayward) ' Poetic Imagery,' ' Metrical Innovation,' ' Dissociation of Sensibility,' and the schoolboy or girl who reads this book will find, not the careful scrutiny of language that brought to light a whole age and revealed new possibilities to our own age, but a series of slogans (' tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace ') divorced from the situations which they elucidated so brilliantly, like a series of formulae with no experimental data—very few science masters would subscribe to that kind of teaching.

A note at the beginning mentions, though, ' the author's approval '; and one might ask whether there is nothing in Mr. Eliot's development to justify Mr. Hayward's surgery. No attempt is made to present Mr. Eliot's ideas as developing; a quotation about tradition from *After Strange Gods* immediately precedes *Tradition*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the Individual Talent. But this last appears, happily, almost in full; and the other selections are sufficiently diverse to obtain some bird's-eye view of the shift of Mr. Eliot's ideas.

The essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* is among those demonstrating Mr. Eliot's method at its best. ' " Interpretation," ' he says in *The Function of Criticism,* ' is only legitimate when it is not interpretation at all, but merely putting the reader in possession of facts which he would otherwise have missed.' This is the genuine disinterestedness of science, as opposed to the pseudo-science of the literary-criticism-branch-of-psychology type; and it is this quality that pervades the early essays—*Andrew Marvell, The Metaphysical Poets,* and the one I am considering. It controls the ordering of the prose, and is the chief source of its vigour. The sense in reading that every word in every sentence is significant, and that any omission would leave a hole in the structure derives from Mr. Eliot's desire to circumscribe exactly the situation he is dealing with; to use words as a scientist might use symbols, putting the reader in possession of facts which he, Eliot, is in possession of, by reproducing them with as complete accuracy as the language available is capable of. The central ideas, of ' impersonality,' and of the ' historic sense,' are of the same kind as scientific hypotheses; not critic-as-artist creations, but principles of investigation, armed with which the reader can penetrate without confusion fields of verse hitherto regarded as treacherous and obscure. Mr. Eliot reclaimed seventeenth century verse from obscurity in the same sense in which an engineer reclaims a swamp, or in which Galileo reclaimed the stellar universe from the astrologers.

The author of *Tradition and the Individual Talent* was an empiricist. The apparent large-scale logical cohesion of the essay dissolves away on close inspection. Although the argument has the appearance of being the work of a distinguished theoretician examining the specific case, it turns out to be the great experimentalist turning over his results to the student. Yet the sense that more than *ad hoc* guidance is possible, that there are general principles somewhere anterior, haunts the essay, and haunts its author. He feels he cannot let the matter rest there, and goes in search of underlying assumptions. The direction in which they lie is clear enough; the province of ethics is one from whose bourne very few literary critics return safely. And with the passage of years we see

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Eliot withdrawing from the hand-to-hand fight with fact, the absorbing attention to the word on the page, and struggling to make his peace with morality.

The shift of attention is marked by a change of subject. The seventeenth century disappears from the field in favour of the nineteenth and twentieth, where, less hampered by exact knowledge, the moralist finds a freer hand. Mr. Eliot himself draws attention to the change when it is well under way. 'The lectures,' he says in the Preface to *After Strange Gods*, 'are not designed to set forth, even in the most summary form, my opinions of the work of contemporary writers: they are concerned with certain ideas in illustration of which I have drawn upon the work of the few modern writers whose work I know. I am not primarily concerned either with their absolute importance or their importance relative to each other . . . I ascended the platform of these lectures in the role of moralist.' And the avowed object of *After Strange Gods* was to produce a Revised Version of *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. He says, significantly, 'The problem, naturally, does not seem to me so simple as it seemed then, nor could I treat it now as a purely literary one.' And we see something of the extent of the departure from the former practice when we read, 'the chief clue to the understanding of most contemporary Anglo-Saxon literature is to be found in the decay of Protestantism.' The recipe now for comprehension—it is implicit in the whole concept of 'orthodoxy'— is to ask no questions, but throw your witches in and see if they drown, and run no risk of endangering your principles: a reversal of the earlier practice. It is no longer possible to say of Mr. Eliot what Mr. Eliot said of Blake: 'because he was not distracted, or frightened, or occupied in anything but exact statements, he understood.' Mr. Eliot is distracted by the ethical generalizations he wishes to consolidate, and his object is no longer to understand, but to convert. His language now loses its analytic nicety, and masses itself to persuade, cajole, bludgeon, as he attacks the unseen Satanic opponent. 'But as the majority is capable neither of strong emotion nor of strong resistance, it always inclines to admire passion for its own sake, unless instructed to the contrary; and if somewhat deficient in vitality, people imagine passion to be the surest evidence of vitality.' *(After Strange Gods)*. Failure to agree to the proclaimed principle can only produce an *impasse:* 'I confess that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I do not know what to make of a generation that ignores these considerations.' When he returns to the seventeenth century now, the subject he chooses is *Pascal's 'Pensées,'* and his criteria of relevance have changed remarkably. 'It is no concern of this essay,' he says, 'whether the Five Propositions condemned at Rome were really maintained by Jansenius in his book *Augustinus*, or whether we should deplore or approve the consequent decay . . . of Port-Royal.' With this we can readily concur; but it is unlikely that we should have in mind the reason which immediately follows. 'It is impossible to discuss the matter without becoming involved as a controversialist either for or against Rome.' Even if one accepts this as true, it is hardly the kind of circumstance which one would expect to concern a disinterested critic.

From this time on Mr. Eliot's Penelope is in sight. *In Religion and Literature* he makes clear that the time for equivocation has passed. 'In ages like our own . . . it is . . . necessary for Christian readers to scrutinize their reading, especially of works of the imagination, with explicit ethical and theological standards.' And the nature of the majority of problems is settled in advance: education, for example *(Modern Education and the Classics)*: 'Education is a subject which cannot be discussed in a void: our questions raise other questions, social, economic, financial, political. And the bearings are on more ultimate problems even than these: to know what we want in education we must know what we want in general, we must derive our theory of education from our philosophy of life. The problem turns out to be a religious problem.' One somehow suspected that it would. As Mr. Eliot stands with top-hat on the table and sleeves rolled at the elbow, it would be surprising if the rabbit failed to emerge. It is not surprising, then, to find that *The Idea of a Christian Society* is almost exclusively preoccupied with generalization, and when the particular judgment occurs its context is prescribed: 'It would perhaps be more natural, as well as in better conformity with the Will of God, if there were more celibates and if those who were married had larger families.' The wheel has come full circle. Mr. Eliot has re-emerged from the thickets of ethical controversy, and can apply himself to the specific case with complete assurance. To realize the most abstract of ideas through the agency of the immediate occasion has been and is one of the most powerful motive forces in Mr. Eliot's verse; but to bring

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Marina or *East Coker* to mind here isn't to convince oneself that Mr. Eliot's critical practice has been improved by being brought into conformity with his poetic practice.

The worst, then, that one can fairly say of Mr. Hayward's selection is that he has accepted a *fait accompli*. If generalization is to become Mr. Eliot's critical métier, then this is merely a fitting garland in his honour; but to those who ten years ago thought him the most distinguished critic that English literature had seen for over a century, it will seem a poor funeral wreath.

R. O. C. WINKLER.

IDEALS AND ILLUSIONS, by L. Susan Stebbing (Watts, 8/6).

This is ' popular philosophy ' only in the sense that it is, as the publishers claim, a book for everyman. There is no claptrap, uplift, or false simplification about it. It shows in fact how hard it is to say when a discussion is ' philosophical ' and when it is not. For instance, Professor Stebbing makes telling criticisms of what might be called the philosophical framework of Carr's *Twenty Years Crisis*, and her examination has made me feel that in reading that in many ways admirable book, I had been superficial in discounting the deficiencies Professor Stebbing exposes, with the reflection that after all Carr didn't profess to be a philosopher, and one couldn't expect everything. For it is precisely the same qualities of keen insight and careful analysis which Carr exercises elsewhere on the international scene between the wars which he lamentably fails to bring into play in the passages which Professor Stebbing justly describes as nonsensical. And there seems no good reason why he should be excused for talking nonsense about political theory just because it is international relations that he is paid for knowing about. If Carr's flounderings are less fatal to his argument as a whole than one might expect, it is only because all that argument requires could be summarized in two or three commonplaces. (The political philosopher, as Mr. Plamenatz remarked a few years ago in an excellent book[1] must not be afraid of commonplaces, and it is one of Professor Stebbing's merits that she never goes out of her way to avoid them.)

If the first chapter of the book exemplifies the relevance of

[1] *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

philosophical precision to thought on topics not strictly philosophical, the third chapter, entitled *The Need for Reflection,* acts as a sort of complement to it, arguing that there is a place for academic detachment in moral philosophy. The reproach of splitting hairs, as she says, ' carries a sting only when it can be shown that the detachment is unwarranted and that what is split really is a hair and not a tangled skein.' This chapter consists of a close examination of a passage from a recent book by the Master of Balliol, and acutely diagnoses both the author's muddled thinking, and the ' attractive air of bluff breeziness ' which cloaks it.

So far I have mentioned only Professor Stebbing's polemical passages, and they form a large part of the book, whose plan is that of an examination of ' what we believe to be the ends for which it is worth while to live,' carried out in a spirit of exploration and clarification, mainly through the analysis of extracts from recent writings bearing on the subject. The author in her last few pages has forestalled any attempt at a summary of the argument, and indeed such a sober and unspectacular discussion, aiming at ' definite specification,' does not show to advantage in summary. Professor Stebbing has not much to say that is new, but *Ideals and Illusions* is a piece of sound workmanship, and the more closely argued parts of it, such as chapter 8, a digression on linguistic pitfalls and on the nature of conscience, would provide an excellent starting-point for further study and reflection. If one seems to have read some of the more general passages rather too often before, it is certainly better to be honestly conventional than to strive for originality and cleverness, especially in moral and political philosophy. I feel a slight disappointment that so much hard and honest thinking should not have got a little further, but the progress it does make it along the right way even if is a well-worn way. Every now and then, too, one is rewarded by some remark which, in its very unobtrusiveness, bears the mark of something maturely cogitated and in its turn calls for leisurely digestion. One instance will serve, though it ought really to be read in its context: ' Most reflective people are prone to over-simplify, not by the simple process of leaving out a great deal as unreflective people do, but by finding common characters which are, however, less significant than the diversities we conceal by using abstract nouns.'

J. C. MAXWELL.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE CONCISE 'C.H.E.L.'

THE CONCISE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, by George Sampson (Cambridge University Press, 15/-).

This is certainly a remarkable tome; the blurb proudly announces the facts—the whole story from Beowulf to T. E. Lawrene, 1,100 pages for 15/-. Obviously a criticism of the views expressed is hardly called for, any more than one now criticises the hansom cab. But undoubtedly a review of the undertaking raises a number of interesting, if baffling, queries.

The Concise History is based in detail on the famous Cambridge History. While behaving towards its parent body with every filial obedience, the new work 'includes certain modifications necessitated by the fact that some of the original chapters were written over thirty years ago.' Thus there are amendments throughout; and there is also a new and original chapter on modern authors. As this final chapter 'occasionally ventures into criticism,' it will be here, presumably, that the test of the first fourteen chapters must be made; this criticism should grow naturally out of the scholarship which went to the making of the original volumes, and no less to Mr. Sampson's epitome.

But, of course, if it proves impossible to keep opinion (for that is what Mr. Sampson means by criticism) out of a chapter on the moderns, it must be equally impossible elsewhere, whatever the pretensions. And so, for all Mr. Sampson's show of impartial scholarship, for all his no doubt genuine ambition to reproduce the spirit of the original, the new History is if anything fundamentally more vehement in the expression of its likes and dislikes than the old. One or two comparisons between the two will enforce this judgment. Of Pope:

> *The Cambridge History*:—'. . . the question is one of temperament. Those who, while not responding readily to violent emotions, are keenly interested in men and manners, but with a chastened passion for green fields, who can appreciate satire and epigram and have a nice sense of finish, will, in every age, enjoy the poetry of Pope for its own sake.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Concise History:—after paraphrasing the above, Mr. Sampson writes 'On the other hand, we shall be untrue to the soul of great literature if we refuse to admit that there are higher reaches of poetry to which Pope had no access . . . We have only to turn to the lyrics of Blake to find a world of poetry from which Pope was everlastingly shut out; and it is a better one than he chose to inhabit.'

Or of Marvell:

The Cambridge History:—Wordsworth 'ranked him with those "who called Milton friend."'

The Concise History:—'We may add that Marvell, like Dryden, knew Milton, admired the man and loved the poet, and that we safely take the word of Marvell and Dryden against that of any modern malcontent.'

The additions are illuminating. The general literary valuations are much the same, but whereas *The Cambridge History* is the work of men who could afford to be magnanimous because their likes and dislikes had not yet been challenged, Mr. Sampson's tone of petulant defiance indicates that, after a lapse of thirty years, what were social beliefs survive only as individual opinions. The easy confidence and calm assertion of the earlier work has degenerated into a staccato insistence. It is simply that contemporary interests no longer accept as self-evident the statement, which Mr. Sampson quotes verbatim, that Milton 'ranks with Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare as one of the four chief pillars of English prosody.' And in consequence Mr. Sampson is nearly always on the defensive, and his alterations or paraphrasing of the original have an air of up-to-date horse-sense which too often turns out to be an effort to cloak his sense of insecurity. Thus he writes:

'Kyd can be easily underrated.'

'Of course in every age there has been, and there always will be, the kind of superior person who disdains it [*The Pilgrim's Progress*]. Such people are naught.'

'That some later readers try to write him [Arnold] down may be taken as a final tribute to his enduring power.'

In fact, Mr. Sampson's unsteady nerve make him far too light on

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the trigger. One can understand (for he is not alone) him shooting off defiantly when guarding the Miltons and Lambs of English literature; and one can guess whom he is aiming at. But who are his adversaries, who are the spectres, when he is dealing with Bunyan or with Arnold's prose? Surely, when one takes up polygamy, it is unreasonable to suspect that *all* one's wives are being Insulted by the Other Man.

In fact, Mr. Sampson has engaged on an activity which was bound to defeat its own ends. If *The Cambridge History* at the time of its publication seemed to embody the century's beliefs, as they had grown and hardened, its interest is now inevitably historical. There really can't be any argument about this (though one hears a great deal of what passes for argument in academic circles). The contemporary scene may be to many people's distaste, and it certainly would be to most of the contributors of the original Cambridge history; but it happens none the less to be a fact, just as Eliot and Matisse and Bartok are facts. And consequently, what thirty years ago was an honest placing of English literature in its contemporary context of scholasticism can now, when reproduced, be little more than an admitted reversion. And since Mr. Sampson, who is obviously quite genuine, can hardly be expected to admit this, he has been forced to try and pass off his corpse as if it were a living organism. And it is not wholly his fault if the formaldehide he has been obliged to use has a rather aggressive smell.

But while one accepts it as quite legitimate that an age should give expression to its matured partiality about this or that, including if it likes English literature up till then, is it quite another matter when this partiality is projected forwards, and, in the person of Mr. Sampson, offers to diagnose its future literature in a similar manner. Because a willingness to refurbish up past prejudices is hardly the quality one looks for in a *critic* of the living scene; and it will be remembered that Mr. Sampson admits that, in this last chapter, he ' occasionally ventures into criticism.' The task of assessing the value of a work of art which has not yet had the chance of becoming a Classic must naturally present formidable difficulties to someone who dutifully looks for *that* trade-mark on the more familiar bottles. The critic who is content, at this date, to take over from his predecessors the valuation that ' In verse, as in figure, Donne is careless of minor beauties ' or that ' Few more

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terrible satires on " greatness " have been written ' than *Jonathan Wild* (that singularly unpleasant and damning novel)—the critic who works at such a distance even from his Classical texts, is not going to get within barge-pole's range of anything more modern and less hallowed. Indeed, Mr. Sampson's chapter on the moderns hasn't even the virtue of being inclusive, a quality one finds in the first fourteen chapters; he makes no mention of Rosenberg, L. H. Myers, Wilson Knight, Robert Graves, or, in the section on Maugham, of *Cakes and Ale,* and virtually none of T. F. Powys, Pound or Forster (though he gives eight pages to Shaw, and deals with Wodehouse, J. C. Squire, and W. S. Houghton). And yet, under certain circumstances, exclusion is perhaps something to be thankful for. To take a few examples:

' Henry James was the Gentleman of Shalott.'

' *Ulysses* would never have a public, even if copies were given away like tracts.'

' We must distinguish here as elewhere between compositions that stimulate the natural motions of the mind and compositions that stimulate clever people to write cleverly. *The Waste Land,* deliberately perverse and obscure, belongs to the second order.'

' What Lawrence does show is a sort of lower-class parody of Byronism.'

Whatever this sort of thing may be called in politer circles, it is certainly not called criticism in mine. Mr. Sampson's account of modern authors is formless and irresponsible precisely because he lacks a critical method. Where his subject-matter, being new-fangled, has had no chance to ' prove its value by showing it can become old,' where no appeals can be made to accumulated opinion, Mr. Sampson has to resort to poorly-digested prejudice. His venom is perhaps not particularly bitter as venom goes, but that, I suspect, is simply because he is less interested. Indeed, as if to rebuke one for ever taking the trouble seriously to read so far, Mr. Sampson turns, ' in conclusion, to the most astonishing man of his time, T. E. Lawrence.'

At which point one may reasonably pause a moment to ask what reading-public the C.U.P. had in mind when they decided to produce a one-volume version of *The Cambridge History.* (Perhaps it was simply in accordance with the present vogue for potted

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

encyclopaedism? If so, one can't help feeling that the Oxford Press chose a better potting subject when they went in for dictionaries.) Mr. Sampson offers the volume to ' all readers of English ' and adds that ' It is not designed solely or even mainly as a text-book for students, though these should find it a useful introduction to a more detailed investigation.' But enough has been said, I think, to make it plain that neither the ordinary reader nor the student are likely to get the help from this work that they may require. The non-specialist reader, for instance, isn't likely to be much concerned with Israel Zangwill, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, or even, in a history of English literature, with Emile Zola, to take the three entries in the index under Z. And the student, who may conceivably wish to know something about these three writers, will obviously need something far more thorough than is given; nor will he find much use for Mr. Sampson's few pages on Shakespeare or Wordsworth, since he may be presumed to have more detailed works on the important poets. In fact, *The Concise History* falls between the devil of inevitable sketchiness on the one hand and the deep sea of all-inclusiveness on the other. And the fault in this case is largely due to having attempted what should never have been considered worth while doing at all, however competently: the fundamental mistake being an effort to do in one medium what can only exist in another quite different one. An extreme example of this kind of sterile scholarship is Cyril M. Beaumont's *Complete Book of Ballets,* which describes the plot and story of all current and most of the obsolete works in the history of classical ballet. It is in this direction that *The Concise History* tends.

And yet scholarship is not necessarily profitless, it's as well to remember, and there are certain histories and manuals which one would be glad to have on the shelf. They divide into two groups: those which undertake a critical survey of the subject, and those which present factual information. The form which a critical history of English literature might take depends, of course, on the use to which it is going to be put. For the general reader, who needs help in seeing the larger pattern, one could hardly do better than model one's history on Roger Fry's essay, in *The Outline of Modern Knowledge,* on the history of art; in some forty pages he gives a masterly analysis of the growth and tradition of the visual arts, an objective but certainly not an impartial analysis. And, needless to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

say, there is no need to be as brief and economical as he was obliged to be; but if any details are going to be filled in, there should be no temptation to be inclusive: it is the pattern, and not the photographic detail, which requires emphasis. Ezra Pound, for instance, would not do such a history well (he is far too irresponsible), but he would merely exaggerate the particular qualities that such a work ought to have. For the student, much the same is required, with the difference that the pattern would be emphasized with minor rather than major talent. Second- and third-rate literature offers no doubt little intrinsic interest, but it reveals very accurately the general health of the artistic patient; it should, one feels, be a truism by now that the great age is not so much the one which produces great artists, as the one which makes best use of its minor potentiality. And, as for the second group, there *are* certain facts about literature which can be stated in plain terms, with genuine impartiality. Thus there is an obvious need for an encyclopaedia of literary fact, containing all names of any importance at all in English literature, the minimum biographical facts about each, a complete chronological bibliography of their works, and (if the work could be large) a bibliography of the relevant critical material with perhaps key quotations from representative criticisms.

And finally the time has come for a history of English society at its margin of contact with English literature. Parts of Mr. Sampson's history are almost meaningless because his terms of reference ruled out any treatment of the social conditions relevant to his subject. What one needs is a history which could supply one with the material necessary to an understanding of, for instance, Jonson's satire, of the emergence of modern English prose, of Jane Austen's assurance—in short, the kind of information that is lacking so patently when Mr. Sampson describes George Sturt as a ' faithful interpreter of southern English village life.' Undoubtedly such a history would become something more than a collection of facts, for the facts in this case are open to dispute. But that something of the kind supplied by L. C. Knights in relation to Jonson, or (if it had a more specifically literary reference) by Basil Willey in his two books, or even something similar to the rather inadequate description of modern French art by Wilensky—something that can enable the reader to cope with literature as a living organism in society has long been needed, and *The Concise History* makes one the more conscious of its absence.

BORIS FORD.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MR. AUDEN'S WELTANSCHAUUNG

NEW YEAR LETTER, by W. H. Auden (*Faber*, 10/6).

Simplicity, it will be recalled, was habitually Mr. Auden's strength and virtue. He was not, in fact, generally classed as one of the ' simple ' poets: in verse, complexity of attitude towards a given situation on the one hand, and simplicity of attitude towards a complex situation on the other, have both given rise to accusations of obscurity. Mr. Auden's method was ordinarily the second of these, and by sticking firmly to a handful of easily-grasped principles, he steered his verses through the intricacies of contemporary existence and produced some interesting patterns of experience. The resultant scope constituted the virtue; the fact that he felt no compulsion to modify his attitudes under the stress of experience enabled him to explore a wide field of phenomena without confusion. The weakness of the plays sprang from the same source—this insistent singularity of outlook and intention was fundamentally undramatic: the apparent interplay of personality was soon revealed as the unsubtle clash of propaganda and counter-propaganda.

The present work consists of a *Prologue*, the *Letter* itself, eighty-two pages of notes in prose and doggerel verse, a series of twenty sonnets, and an *Epilogue*. The *Letter* is described on the wrapper as ' a long philosophical poem in a regular metre,' and my guess is that it's only a matter of months before it's described in one university or another as a ' twentieth century *Essay on Man* ' or ' another *First Anniversarie.*' The simplicity of Mr. Auden's ideas persists; indeed, deployed as it is over some eight hundred and fifty octosyllabic couplets, it can fairly be considered obtrusive. The central conception of modern social life as a kind of tribal war of scattered groups, enunciated so effectively in *Paid on Both Sides*, reappears; though in the interval, under the tuition of Kafka and others, Mr. Auden has discovered that each of these groups has only one member—

> For the machine has cried aloud
> And publicized among the crowd
> The secret that was always true
> But known once only to the few,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Compelling all to the admission
Aloneness is man's real condition . . .
(II. 1537-1542)

And this is seen as the natural result of the process that began with the Renaissance, leading the individual into self-contradictions from which art provides no escape, and to which (roughly) the solution is universal love:

How readily would we become
The seamless live continuum
Of supple and coherent stuff
Whose form is truth, whose content love,
Its pluralist interstices
The homes of happiness and peace,
Where in a unity of praise
The largest publicum's a res
And the least res a publicum;
How grandly would our virtues bloom
In a more conscionable dust
Where Freedom dwells because it must
Necessity because it can,
And men confederate in Man. (II. 1589-1602).

This is a representative quotation. It has all the persistent qualities of the poem as a whole. Robbed of the concrete situation to serve as an agent for precipitating his ideas, Mr. Auden has to rely on personification to give them body, and metre and rhyme to give them sinew—an inversion of the usual practice of good verse (Mr. Auden's own practice in the best of the 1930 *Poems*), where the idea crystallizes the imagery and modulates the rhythm; and the effect is to hang a curtain between author and reader. The method implies reaction in Mr. Auden's system of ideas. His solution to the predicament in which Renaissance man finds himself at the latter end of his pilgrim's progress is to return to the attitudes which were revolutionary at the beginning of that pilgrimage, and establish them in the appropriate verse-form—indifferent to the fact that personifications, for example, that were disturbing at a time when scientific quantification was giving a new point to the figures of the moralities are now, after three centuries of logical sophistication, as ineffectual and forlorn as a Britannia in a *Punch* cartoon.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The ' wit ' too, which was at once evidence of resilience and the cutting-edge in the arguments of the seventeenth-century practitioners in Mr. Auden's adopted verse-form, is here jam to mix with the powder, and every now and again quips are inserted, rather like daring sallies in the college magazine by a theological student at a Scottish university—

> In Ireland the great *Berkeley* rose
> To add new glories to our prose,
> But when in the pursuit of knowledge,
> Risking the future of his college,
> The bishop hid his anxious face,
> 'Twas more by grammar than by grace
> His modest Church-of-England God
> Sustained the fellows and the quad. (II. 459-466).

One is reminded that the Ministry of Information has lately found the same verse-form a convenient vehicle for National Savings propaganda—

> ' So why don't you do like your mates
> And purchase some certificates?
> They're free from fire and flood and crime,
> —And only fifteen bob a time! '

(I quote from memory.)

It is only (too rarely) when a physically-conceived situation dramatizes the idea that the verse abandons its bludgeoning and momentarily acquires the kind of subtlety which might have been its staple quality.

> O but it happens every day
> To someone. Suddenly the way
> Leads straight into their native lands,
> The Temeno's small wicket stands
> Wide open, shining at the centre
> The well of life, and they may enter. (II. 860-865)

But Philosophy is at hand (Nietzsche this time), and Mr. Auden reverts to the planchette again almost immediately—

> Though compasses and stars cannot
> Direct to the magnetic spot,
> Nor Will nor willing-not-to will,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For there is neither good nor ill
But free rejoicing energy . . .

The notes to the *Letter* are, in bulk, considerably more extensive than the poem itself. At first reading I had the impression that they were intended to be read together with the poem more or less as a single unit, which would provide some justification for their bulk; but the patent irrelevance of many of them discredited this view on subsequent readings. They are intended, I think, to give an impression of the diversity of material from which the poem itself was distilled. If one accepts this account, it isn't altogether surprising to find that some of the bones contain more nutriment than the soup. They are, however, generously assorted. Some of them serve the same purpose as those to *The Waste Land,* and merely supply the source for a quotation, or cite a reference for some piece of information of which the reader might otherwise have been ignorant. Many of them, though, demonstrating a less healthy aspect of Mr. Auden's naïveté, are quotations from suspiciously fashionable authors like Kafka, Kierkegaard and Rilke, whose connection with the matter in hand is little more than generic. Other notes are prose aphorisms dealing with Sin, Forgiveness, and kindred matters, in the Emersonian ' Thought for To-day ' tradition. The remaining main class of notes is a number of verses modelled, possibly, on Swift's epigrams), incidental to the central pattern, and most of which could have been omitted without loss. A quotation will indicate that when I referred to them earlier as ' doggerel,' I was expressing not a spirit of disparagement but a matter of fact; it is a note on the couplet (1. 961)

Once again let us set out
Our faith well balanced by our doubt

and runs,

With what conviction the young man spoke
When he thought his nonsense rather a joke:
Now, when he doesn't doubt any more,
No-one believes the booming old bore.

The Prologue and the sonnet sequence (called *The Quest*) engage the attention more fully than the *Letter*. *The Quest* is a series of twenty sonnets mostly about a generalized ' He,' somewhat in the manner of Kafka's *Notes from the Year 1920*. With

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less space at his disposal for the manoeuvering of his attitudes, Mr. Auden here finds the specific situation (though allegorical) a convenient vehicle, and the verse and the words of which it is constructed display considerably more animation as a result. But the tendency to accept the easy solution (of the moral problem and the problem of composition, which I take to be continuous) persists, and musty personifications reappear:

> And when Truth met him and put out her hand
> He clung in panic to his tall belief
> And shrank away like an ill-treated child. (VI)

The ghost of Herbert in Freudian uniform doesn't really offer one a technical or ethical solution, but, on the contrary, points the inadequacy of any attempt to make ends meet that ignores the nature of the material between the ends. It is in keeping with this too easy simplification that the Boy Scout earnestness of *The Ascent of F6* reappears in the Excelsioresque tones of the *Epilogue:*

> Let the lips do formal contrition
> For whatever is going to happen . . .
> That the orgulous spirit may while it can
> Conform to its temporal focus with praise,
> Acknowledging the attributes of
> One immortal, one infinite substance;
>
> And the shabby structure of indolent flesh
> Give a resonant echo to the Word which was
> From the beginning, and the shining
> Light be comprehended by the darkness.

The *Prologue* comes closer than anything else in this book to the best of Mr. Auden's earlier work. The standpoint is more mature, by about three hundred years, and the reminiscences of Eliot[1] are indicative, not of plagiarism, but of contemporaneity. The *Letter* really adds little to the exposition of the problem in the *Prologue,* and I would suggest that another edition of this book

[1] *cf.* the passage beginning ' Only on battlefields . . .' with *The Waste Land,* I. 415, and the specific reference to *Ash Wednesday,* II, in the passage beginning, ' For, however they dream they are scattered, Our bones cannot help reassembling themselves . . .'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

omitting the *Letter* and the notes would detract less from Mr. Auden's deserved reputation.

R. O. C. WINKLER.

A BRAHMS RECORDING

BRAHMS: Trio in A minor for clarinet, cello and piano, played by Reginald Kell, Anthony Pini and Louis Kentner (Columbia, 22/-).

That Brahms is a classical romantic or a romantic classic—popular journalism; yet this ambiguousness has, I think, a specific critical significance if we relate it to the technical meaning which I tried to give to the terms ' classical ' and ' romantic ' in an article on Music and the Dramatic published in *Scrutiny* for June, 1940. Roughly speaking, I equated classicism with the vocal, melodic and polyphonic discipline—the ' natural ' musical forms; romanticism with a homophonic concern for harmony marking so many points in a rhetorical argument—usually implying instrumental resource and an extramelodic notion of rhythm. Technically Brahms may be said to live on an equator between these two poles: the texture of his most mature works is very polyphonic, but the themes themselves are usually harmonically founded, being extensions or modifications of diatonic triads just as many of Wagner's themes resolve into spread-out versions of chromatic chord formations. Relative to Wagner's, Brahms's polyphony is authentic and traditional: but it is a compromise between the melodic principles of polyphony (which are by nature vocal and modal) and an instrumental diatonicism, and the composer's ' development ' may be described as the gradual acquiring of a convincing fluency in the execution of this compromise.

The *Second Symphony* seems to me the crucial point in Brahms's creative career because it is at once his most lyrical and vocal work and his most stably diatonic; the themes, though wonderfully fluid, are more unequivocally diatonic in harmonic ethos than anything in mature Mozart, or still more in mature Haydn. In the very late works the compromise became more subtle because more unobtrusive, but it remained substantially the same. The *Clarinet Trio* now recorded combines the most flexible interflow of lines over an instrumentally conceived harmonic system with an

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exquisite command of the resources of the instruments' tonal colour. Never was ' loveliness of sound ' more completely inseparable from mastery of a technical problem, itself implying mastery of experience, for Brahms's autumnal gentleness and magnificent melancholy in these final works are also aspects of his position in the history of the ' technique ' of composition.

Performance and recording of this noble work are admirable.

W.H.M.

MR. NEWTON AND THE CONQUEST OF APPEARANCES

EUROPEAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, by Eric Newton (*Pelican Books*, 6d.).

Mr. Newton announces his aim in the following terms, ' It is not the ingredients but the flavour of paintings and carvings I have tried to communicate . . . My hope in writing this book is not so much to set forth the facts of the story of art as to communicate my enthusiasms about it.' Although one might dispute the wisdom of this aim, in that surely what is most wanted from the Pelicans is not another handbook to the galleries, but some attempt to weave the present welter of schools and movements into an intelligible design?—nonetheless it would be as well to examine Mr. Newton's account in the light of his own intentions.

At the end of the book is a table of artists each of which is represented by a line which varies in width according to Mr. Newton's estimate of their ' importance.' He attempts to be as impartial as possible in determining the correct width of these lines, for instance although he does not much enjoy Rembrandt himself, he nonetheless honours him with the thickest line. ' By the examiner's standards ' he says, ' Rembrandt has no rival. But yet how I wish he could give me more pleasure!' Or again of Michelangelo ' Such men do not occur often. One's admiration of them is always mingled with a certain sense of discomfort.' But what are the examiner's standards? The examiner, he says, is one who ' coldly accords marks of excellence . . . If a list of qualities essential to the make-up of every painter were to be drawn up . . . Rembrandt would head the list with an accumulation of marks which no other painter could touch.' The fact that Mr. Newton can

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seriously suppose that such a method of assessing the value of an artist's work could possibly produce any results of importance, is indeed staggering in a critic apparently so widely read and admired. But what must appear as still more revealing is that it is precisely this method which he adopts in dealing with the vast majority of the other great painters. Thus he says of Raphael ' whichever of his qualities one selects as typical of him, one can always think of some other Florentine painter who possessed the same qualities to a greater degree. His sweetness? But Perugino, his master, was even sweeter. His power to organize a big composition? But Leonardo had even higher powers of organization. His sense of balance? But it was no greater than Piero's. His power to invent rhetorical gesture? But there he was a weak imitator of Michelangelo.' Are we to assume then that when confronted with Raphael Mr. Newton fails, as with Rembrandt, to light up in the appropriate manner or merely that he is entirely unable to resolve his feelings into words? It is impossible to tell; but presumably if he can conceive of the possibility of dissecting the work of art in this way it is only because he is fundamentally unable to feel its impact as a unified experience—a stab rather than a series of pin-pricks—and that therefore, in the last resort, he is unable fully to appreciate not merely Rembrandt, Michelangelo, and Raphael, but any artist of merit.

It seems reasonable to assume that the various qualities Mr. Newton has attributed to Raphael react upon each other, and that his sweetness (whatever that may be) is modified by being in contact with his rhetorical gesture, and is therefore no longer comparable to the sweetness of Perugino. Mr. Newton suggests that Raphael was at bottom an eclectic, but for anyone who has eyes to see the distinctive feature of Raphael's art is its remarkable purity, a purity so uncompromising as to lead even to impoverishment. It is an art which reveals itself slowly: as Keats has said ' A year ago I could not understand, in the slightest degree, Raphael's cartoons—now I begin to read them a little—and how did I learn to do so? By seeing something done in quite an opposite spirit . . . canting . . . melodramatic.' But if the art of Raphael seems to lack something in fecundity it is not because it is ' a mere amalgam of elements invented by Perugino and Michelangelo,' but because he was ruthlessly overworked and rarely permitted to leave his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dungeon studio to widen the range of his experience in any way.

Which brings me to Mr. Newton's interpretation of ' the facts of the story of art ' which (perhaps wisely as it now appears) he relegates to a place of secondary importance in his general scheme. The history of art, he claims, is checkered by varying attempts on the part of the artist ' to reconcile the conflicting claims of symbolism and realism.' ' The pendulum ' he says ' constantly swings backwards and forwards between the two.' Thus it swung backwards, *i.e.*, towards the symbolic, in the Byzantine era ' until Giotto stopped it dead and started it swinging back through the cycle Giotto, Masaccio, Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Monet, Cézanne. Draw a line through those seven names and you get a curve which is the last full swing of the pendulum . . . Those six centuries mark the gradual solution of one problem after another in the conquest of appearances . . . The pendulum has now begun to swing back again.' In other words he regards the creative impulse which moulds the history of post-Giotto art as a desire for a more complete naturalism. He evinces a certain concern for the slowness of the progress made, but satisfies himself by saying that ' it is useless for the artist to tell himself that the whole visible world in all its aspects is at his disposal. The sentry in his brain stands on guard in spite of him.' But surely if one can talk in terms of a sentry on guard, he stands not within the artist's brain but in the social organism of which he is a part? Indeed the great artist will always be able (if he so chooses) to utilize to the full any resources which society places at his disposal. If at certain times he choses not to do so, it is only because he feels that the pressure of his experience does not, in any way, merit a widening of the means of expression. Just as the composer may well be satisfied with a solo instrument or a quartet, so at any given moment is the painter with the limited means at his disposal. The fact that the history of recent European art has been so much characterized by a gradual expansion of the painter's means, rather than the reverse as in Byzantium, can be explained by a similar expansion and in many cases disintegration of the social organism. The greater the variety and complexity of the contemporary life the more complex and comprehensive must become the means by which the artist intends to cope with it. But this is not necessarily progress or evolution, in many cases it may result in decay and loss of contact. Indeed it

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it interesting to note that the process of expansion has frequently taken place away from the current centre of culture. Thus in the 16th century while Venice, then the only Italian state which retained her independence against foreign invasion and the stultifying influence of the counter-reformation, remained faithful to the *classical* tradition of Giotto and Masaccio, it was elsewhere—in the now enslaved Florence, Rome, and Spanish Naples—that the followers of Michelangelo and Caravaggio pressed on towards the establishment of a style of greater violence and dramatic intensity, and in so doing discovered the new possibilities of recession and chiaroscuro. And likewise it was France in the 17th century which remained the stronghold against the illusionism of Rubens, and England in the 18th century.

The creative impulse behind the many changes of plastic vision is, then, the desire to remain veracious to the spirit of the age. The ' solution of one problem after another in the conquest of appearances ' is a mere by product of this activity. To say as Mr. Newton does that ' both Florence and Venice had drawn their vitality from excitement at their own visual discoveries ' is tantamount to placing the arts of painting and sculpture on the level of some branch of astronomy. But at the same time it would equally be fallacious to suppose that each period is a separate study in itself, and that what one age does has no connection with the activities of the next. The task of the historian-critic is to reveal not merely the nature of the social context as it touches the artist, but also the manner in which he is influenced by the various artistic traditions of the past. Thus he will supply an imperfect or blurred account of why the art of Delacroix took the form it did if he merely talks about the French Revolution and the Romantic Revival, it is necessary for him also to examine the painting of Rubens and to discover in what way Delacroix was so much influenced by it.

Professor Wolfflin, in his *Principles of Art History*, even goes so far as to contend that fundamentally all plastic expression tends to divide itself into two main stylistic categories: the *classical* which satisfies the need for regularity and symmetry and which may be represented by a circle, and the *baroque* which is actuated by a single rhythmic idea, comparable to the *idée fixe* of romantic music and literature, and which may therefore be said to follow a straight line to infinity, never satisfied with its acquisitions. The implica-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion of this theory being that the *classical* style tends to reflect a background of social harmony and balance, as in 15th century Florence, whereas the *baroque* corresponds to a period of comparative disruption, such as was experienced in Europe during the 17th century. But this does not in any way rule out an attempt to revive any of these styles at moments when the state of society happens to be inappropriate for their general acceptance. Such attempts will, of course, prove more or less successful according to the individual temperament of the artist concerned and his ability to create a local milieu suitable to his ends. Thus Ingres succeeded only in producing a sort of parody (though eminently skilful) of the classical tradition, whereas Cézanne, for reasons which derived both from his personality and the peculiar conditions of his life, proved better fitted for a similar enterprise. The achievements of Cézanne were in every way exceptional, and the failure to realize this fact has resulted in the vacuity of so much cubist and abstract art, which has been produced in an environment wholly alien to its aspirations. Thus rather than representing the progressive elements of the age, as they imagine, the Cubists are in fact symptomatic of its most backward aspects; and far from reinstating a classical symmetry into things, they have merely evolved the artistic equivalent of the sterile order of the machine.

I have referred to Wolfflin's principles because I believe that, with certain modifications, they offer an alternative method of bringing some order into the chaos of art history, from that postulated by Mr. Newton in his conception of the symbolic and naturalistic. The absurdity of which is finally established when, on reaching the 20th century, Mr. Newton finds himself obliged to suppose that ' the artist's six-century-long attempt to capture the truth of appearances . . . has come to an end ' and that now the pendulum has begun to swing back again towards the symbolic. Modern art, he says, ' is the expression of the inner vision of a man who has no longer any need to bother about society.' In brief, Mr. Newton's failure to understand the art of to-day gives us an additional reason for questioning his qualifications for examining the art of the past, if indeed that matter was still in any doubt.

STEPHEN REISS.

SCRUTINY is published by the Editors, Downing College, Cambridge; distributed by Deighton, Bell & Co., Ltd., Trinity Street, Cambridge; and printed by S. G. Marshall & Son, Round Church Street, Cambridge, England.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED